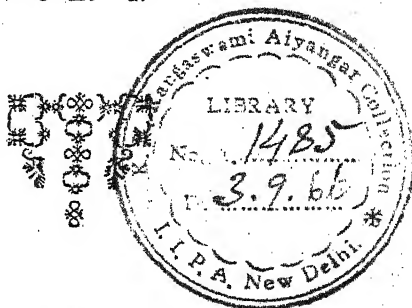




THE
DRAMATIC WORKS
OF
Mr. DE VOLTAIRE.

Translated by the Rev. Mr. FRANCKLIN.

VOL. I.



L O N D O N :

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M.DCC.LXI.

This VOLUME contains

A LETTER from Mr. DE VOLTAIRE to Father
PORÉE, a Jesuit.

PREFACE to OEDIPUS.

OEDIPUS, a Tragedy.

PREFACE to MARIAMNE.

MARIAMNE, a Tragedy.

DISCOURSE on TRAGEDY, in a Letter to Lord
BOLINGBROKE.

BRUTUS, a Tragedy.

[3]

A

L E T T E R

F R O M

M R. V O L T A I R E.

T O

FATHER, P O R É E, a J E S U I T.

YOU will receive, my dear father, by this packet, the new edition of my tragedy of Oedipus. I have taken care to wash out, as well as I could, the disagreeable colours of a love-plot, very ill placed, which, in spite of myself, I was obliged to mix with those strokes of the manly and terrible, which the subject naturally demands. I must at the same time inform you, in my own justification, that, * young as I was when Oedipus was

* Oedipus was written when Mr. de Voltaire was but nineteen years of age. It was played for the first time in 1718, and ran five-and-forty nights. Du Frêne, a celebrated actor, and of the same age with the author, played the part of Oedipus; and Madame Desmarêts, a famous actress, did Jocasta, and soon after quitted the stage. In this edition, the part of Philoctetes is restored, and stands exactly as it was in the first representation.

written, it was then very nearly the same as it now stands: my mind filled with the reading of the antients, and your judicious reflections on them, and little acquainted with the theatre of Paris, I set about the performance as if I had been at Athens. I consulted Mr. Dacier, who was of the country: he advised me to put a chorus into every scene, after the manner of the Greeks: he might as well have advised me to walk about the streets of Paris with Plato's gown on. I had much ado only to persuade the players to perform the chorusses which appear three or four times in the piece; and greater still was the difficulty to make them act a tragedy almost without any love in it: the actresses laughed at me when they found there was never a tender scene for them; the reciprocal confidence of Oedipus and Jocasta, taken partly from Sophocles, was thought quite insipid: in a word, the actors, who at that time were all grand signiors and petits-maitres, absolutely refused to represent it. I was extremely young, and believed they might be in the right of it. To please them, I spoiled my play, by inserting several uninteresting scenes of tenderness in a subject intirely foreign to them. When I had put a little love into it, they became partly reconciled; but would by no means permit me to bring in the grand scene between Oedipus and Jocasta: Sophocles

phocles and his imitator were treated with equal contempt. I still persevered, repeated my reasons, employed my friends to solicit, and at last, by dint of powerful protection, got my Oedipus on the stage. One of the actors, whose name was Quinaut, declared openly, that the piece should be played exactly as it was written, with the vile fourth act taken from the Greek; which would be a sufficient punishment for my obstinacy. Besides all this, I was looked on as a rash young man, for daring to write on a subject which the great Corneille had already treated so successfully. At that time Corneille's Oedipus was esteemed a master-piece: I thought it a poor performance, but durst not say so till about twelve years after, when all the world were of the same opinion. In things of this nature, it is generally some years before strict justice is suffered to take place. The two tragedies of La Motte on this subject met with it indeed a little sooner than ordinary. Father Tournemine has, I suppose, shewn to you the little preface in which I have attacked him. Mons. de la Motte has a great deal of wit: he is not unlike the famous Grecian wrestler, who, when he was thrown down, could always prove that he was uppermost. We totally disagree in our opinions; but you have taught me to dispute like a man of honour and a

gentleman. I wrote against him with so much politeness, that I even desired him to criticise himself that preface wherein I have endeavoured in every line to prove him in the wrong ; and my little polemic dissertation met with his applause. This is the method which men of letters should always make use of in their controversies with each other ; and this they would always pursue, who had been under your tuition : but they are generally as full of acrimony as a lawyer, and as angry as a Jansenist. Polite literature is grown, of all things, the most unpolite. We cabal, we asperse, we calumniate, we write verses against one another. It is pleasant enough that we should be at liberty to tell folks in writing what we dare not speak to their faces. You, my dear father, taught me to avoid all such mean practices ; how to live, as well as how to write.

With love alone the heav'n-born muses glow,
 No jealous pangs th' immortal sisters know ;
 They taste no gall, but with ambrosia fed,
 O'er all their kind their genial influence shed ;
 When Jove convenes them to the blest abodes,
 He calls not satire to the feast of gods,
 Lest the foul fiend should ranc'rous hate inspire,
 And jar the strings of their harmonious lyre.

Adieu,

Adieu, my dear father, and believe me attached to you and yours by that tender regard which I owe you, and which those who were educated by you do not always retain.

Paris, Jan. 7th,
1729.

PREFACE.

P R E F A C E.

THE Oedipus, now re-printed, was represented for the first time at the end of the year 1713, and received with great indulgence by the public, it has even since that time supported itself on the stage, and is seen to this day with some pleasure, in spite of all its faults; a circumstance which I attribute partly to its advantage of being always well acted, and partly to the pomp and solemnity of the spectacle, together with some intrinsic merit in the piece. P. Folard, the jesuit, and Mr. de la Motte,* of the French academy, have both of them since treated the same subject, and both avoided the errors which I had fallen into. It is not my business to criticise their performances, my censures and my praises would be equally liable to suspicion: still further is my intention from pretending to lay down rules for writing tragedy. I am persuaded, that all those refined reasonings, so often reiterated, are scarce worth one single scene of genius;

* Monsi. de la Motte presented the world with two Oedipus's, one in verse, the other in prose, in the year 1726: that in verse was played four times; the prose was never represented at all. See La Motte's works, duodecimo. vol. ii. and iii.

and that we may learn more from † Cinna and Poly-eucte, than from all the precepts of ‡ D'Aubignac. Severus and Paulinus are true masters of the art. All the books on painting, which were ever written by the greatest connoisseurs, would not give a young painter half the instruction as only the sight of a head by Raphael.

The principles of all the arts that depend on the imagination are easy and simple, all drawn from nature and from reason. Our Pradons and Boyers knew them as well as our Corneille's and Racine's; the only difference was, and always will be, in their application of them. The worst composers had the same rules of music before them, as the authors of Armida and Isle. Pouffin worked upon the same principles as Vignon. 'Tis as useless, therefore, to talk of rules in a preface to a tragedy, as it would be to a painter to endeavour to prejudice the public in his favour, by a dissertation on his pictures; or to a musician, to prove by demonstration, that his compositions must be sure to please.

But since Mons. de la Motte seems desirous of establishing rules, directly opposite to those which our

† Cinna and Polyeucte, two tragedies by Corneille.

‡ La Pratique du Theatre, par l'Abbé D'Aubignac, a very judicious and sensible performance.

great masters submitted to, it is but just to defend the antient laws; not because they are ancient, but because they are good and necessary, and because those laws might find a very powerful adversary in a man of his distinguished merit.

OF THE THREE UNITIES.

Mr. de la Motte would abolish the unities of action, time, and place. The French were the first of the moderns, who revived the wise rules of the antient theatre: other nations refused for a long time submission to a yoke, which they thought too severe; but as the laws were just, and reason must triumph at last, in process of time they yielded also. Even in England, at this day, authors give us notice at the beginning of their pieces, that the time employed in the action is equal to that of the representation, and thus go further than ourselves who taught them. All nations now begin to look upon those ages as barbarous, when this practice was entirely unknown to the greatest geniusses, such as Lopez de Vega and Shakespeare; they acknowledge their obligation to us for awakening them from this gothicism; and shall a Frenchman after this exercise all his wit and abilities to reduce us once more to the same standard?

Had I nothing more to offer in opposition to Mr. de la Motte, than that Corneille, Racine, Moliere, Addison, Congreve, and Maffei, have all observed the rules of the theatre, it would be sufficient to prevent the violation of them ; but a man of such superior understanding as M. de la Motte has a right to expect that we should oppose him rather by reason than by authority.

What is a theatrical performance? The representation of an action. Why of a single action, and not of two or three? Doubtless, because the human mind is incapable of embracing more than one object at a time ; because the interest, which is divided, is soon destroyed ; because we are disgusted at seeing two different events even in a picture ; it is, in short, because nature alone points out to us this precept, which is as invariable as herself.

For the same reason unity of place is essential ; for a single action cannot possibly happen in several places at a time : if the persons of the drama are at Athens in the first act, how can they be at Persia in the second? Did Le Brun paint Alexander at Arbele and the Indies on the same canvas? ‘ I should not be in the least surprized,’ (says M. de la Motte, with all the smartness imaginable) ‘ to see a sensible people, not fond of rules, reconcile themselves to the represen-

‘ tation of Coriolanus, condemned at Rome in the
 ‘ first act, received by the Volsci in the third, besieging
 ‘ Rome in the fourth,’ &c. But, in the first place,
 I cannot conceive how a sensible and refined people
 can possibly be an enemy to rules; rules suggested by
 good sense, and calculated for their pleasure: and se-
 condly, is it not evident, that in this case there would
 in fact be three distinct tragedies, and that such a per-
 formance, however well executed, and put into the
 best poetry, would in effect be after all no more, than
 a piece of Jodelle or Hardy’s versified by an inge-
 nious modern.

The unity of time naturally follows the other two,
 of which this is, I think, an incontestible proof: I
 come to a tragedy, that is to say, to the representation
 of an action; the subject is the accomplishment of
 this single action. A conspiracy is formed against
 Augustus at Rome; I want to know what happens to
 Augustus and to the conspirators. If the poet makes
 the action last fifteen days, he ought to give me an ac-
 count of what passes during that time; I come
 there to be informed of every circumstance, and no-
 thing should pass that is useless. If he represents the
 events of fifteen days, there must be at least fifteen
 different actions, however inconsiderable they may all
 be: it is no longer the accomplishment of that single
 action

action of the conspiracy, towards which we are to proceed as speedily as possible, but a long tedious history, which cannot be interesting, because it is not lively ; because the whole will be at too great a distance from the decisive moment, from the catastrophe, which is the principal thing I am in expectation of. I don't go to the play to hear the history of a hero, but to see one single event of his life, and there perhaps I meet with many. But further, the spectator is but three hours at the theatre, the action therefore should last no longer than that time ; *Cinna*, *Andromache*, *Oedipus*, *Corneille's*, *la Motte's*, and my own (if I may be permitted to mention it) are all within this rule. If some other pieces require more time, it is a licence, which can only be pardoned in favour of great beauties in the work, and the more this licence is indulged, the more faulty it becomes.

We often extend the unity of time to twenty-four hours, and the unity of place to the whole circumference of a palace. More severity would prevent the handling some very fine subjects, and more indulgence would open the way to intolerable abuses ; for if it was once made an established rule, that a theatric action might continue for two days, one author would soon extend it to two weeks, and another to two years ; and in the same manner, if the place of the scene

scene was not confined to certain limits, we should soon see tragedies, like the old Julius Cæsar of the English, where Brutus and Cassius are at Rome in the first act, and in Thessaly in the fifth.

The observation of these rules serves not only to prevent faults, but it is likewise productive of true beauties, in the same manner as the rules of fine architecture well followed necessarily compose a building agreeable to the eye. We easily perceive, that by adhering to the unities of time, place, and action, the piece must be simple. It is this which constitutes the merit of all Racine's performances, and is that very perfection which Aristotle required. Mr. de la Motte, in defending one of his own tragedies, prefers a multiplicity of events to this noble simplicity, and imagines the truth of his sentiments confirmed by the little applause which Berenice met with, and the great character which the Cid bears to this day. Certain it is, that the Cid is much more affecting than Berenice; but Berenice is only contemptible, because it is rather an elegy than a simple tragedy: and the Cid, the action of which is truly tragic, is not indebted for its success to the multiplicity of events, but pleases in spite of that multiplicity; as it affects us in spite of the Infanta, and not because of the Infanta.

Mr. de la Motte believes that we may be superior to all these rules, by adhering solely to the unity of interest.

interest, which, he tells us, was invented by himself, and calls a paradox; but this unity of interest appears to me to be nothing more in reality than the unity of action. ‘ If many persons (says he) are differently interested in the same event, and all of them such characters as are worthy of my attention, there must be unity of action, and not unity of interest.’ Since I took the liberty of differing with Mr. de la Motte on this subject I have perused and re-considered Corneille’s discourse on the three unities. The reader had better consult this great master than me. Observe how he expresses himself, ‘ it is my opinion, and I have already declared it, that the unity of action consists in unity of plot and unity of danger.’ Whoever consults this passage of Corneille will soon decide between Mr. de la Motte and me: and if the authority of this great man were not of itself sufficient to confute my adversary, have not I something still more convincing? namely, experience. In reading our best French tragedies, we shall always find the principal characters differently interested; but all these different interests tend towards that of the principal character, and thus constitute the unity of action. If, on the contrary, all these different interests do not tend towards the principal, if they are not lines drawn to one common centre, the interest

is then double, and what we call, the action, must be so likewise. Let us then, with the great Corneille, adhere to the three unities, in which we shall find all the other rules, that is to say, all other beauties, comprehended. Mr. de la Motte calls them the principles of fancy, and attempts to prove, that we may do without them in tragedy, because we do so in our operas; which, in my opinion, is as absurd, as to endeavour to correct a regular government by the example of an anarchy.

OF THE OPERA.

The opera is a spectacle as whimsical and absurd as grand and magnificent, where the eye and ear receive more satisfaction than the mind; where its subjection to music makes the most ridiculous faults even necessary; where we are forc'd to sing ballads at the destruction of a city, and dance round a tomb-stone; where we are presented with the palaces of Pluto, and the sun, gods, demons, magicians, signs and wonders, monsters, palaces built and pull'd down in the twinkling of an eye. We suffer these extravagancies, and are even fond of them, because there we are in the land of fairies; and provided we have but fine sights, good dancing and music, with a few interesting scenes, we are very well satisfied. It would

would be as ridiculous to require the unities of time, place, and action in *Alceste*, as to introduce dances and devils in *Cinna* or *Rodogune*. Notwithstanding, however, that operas may dispense with these rules, those are still the best where they are least violated: in many, if I am not mistaken, they are re-established, so necessary and natural are they, and conducing so effectually to interest the spectator; how then can Mr. de la Motte reproach our nation with levity, for condemning in one entertainment the very things which we approve of in another? Every man must see the absurdity of it. I expect, and with reason, more perfection in a tragedy than an opera; because at a tragedy my attention is not divided; it is not on a saraband or a minuet that my pleasure depends, my mind is to be filled, my soul is to be delighted. I wonder how the author could contrive to bring together in one place, and one day, the several parts of an event, which my mind can scarce conceive without labour, and where my heart becomes by degrees more and more interested. The more difficult this simplicity appears to me, the more it charms me; and when I want to account for this pleasure, I find myself of Mr. Despreaux's opinion, who says,

Qu'en

Qu'en un lieu, qu'en un jour un seul fait accompli
 Tienne jusqu' à la fin le théâtre rempli.*

I have besides, he will say, the authority of the great Corneille; and I have still more, I have his example, and the pleasure which his works give me, in proportion as he conforms more or less to this rule.

But Mr. de la Motte, not content with endeavouring to deprive the theatre of its established laws, would even take away its poetry also, and give us tragedies in prose.

OF VERSES IN PROSE.

This ingenious and prolific author, who has done nothing all his life but write verses, or prose occasioned by his verses, writes against his own art, and treats it with the same contempt as he did Homer, whom, notwithstanding, he took the pains to translate. Never did Virgil, Tasso, Despreaux, Racine, or Pope, think of writing against the harmony of verse; nor Lully against music, or Newton against the mathematics. We have sometimes seen men weak enough to think themselves above their profession, which is the sure way to fall beneath it; but we have never seen any who were so ridiculous as to depreciate it. There

* These lines are taken from Boileau's Art of Poetry.

* One place, one day, and one single action, should fill the stage from the beginning to the end of the representation.

are but too many who despise poetry, because they know nothing of it. Paris is full of people, and even of men of sense, born with organs utterly insensible of all harmony, to whom music is nothing but noise, and poetry an ingenious folly. If these persons are told, that a man of merit, who has writ five or six volumes of verses, is of their opinion with regard to them, will they not think they have a right to look upon all other poets as fools, and this man as the only one who has recovered his senses? It is therefore necessary to answer him for the honour of the art, and I will venture to add, for the honour of a country, which owes part of its reputation, among strangers, to its perfection in that art.

Mr. de la Motte has asserted, that rhyme is a barbarous invention, of a very modern date. Notwithstanding this, every nation in the universe, except the ancient Greeks and Romans, have rhimed, and continue rhiming to this day. This return of the same sounds to the ear is so natural to all mankind, that we find rhyme practised among savages, as much as it is at Rome, Paris, London, and Madrid. Montagne has given us a translation into French of a song, written in American rhyme; and in one of Addison's Spectators we meet with a Lapland ode, the original
of

of which is also in rhyme, and which is full of fine sentiments. The Greeks,

———— quibus dedit ore rotundo
Musa loqui —————

born in a happier climate, and blessed with more delicate organs than other nations, had a language, whose syllables, by their length or shortness, could exactly and properly express every movement of the soul, whether slow or rapid. From that variety of intonations resulted, both in their verse and prose, an harmonious sweetness, which the ancient Romans caught and imitated, and which, since them, no other nation hath been able to attain. But poetry, however, which Mr. de la Motte is so angry with, be it rhyme or cadenc'd syllables, has always been, and always will continue to be, cultivated by all mankind.

Before the time of Herodotus, even history was always written in verse among the Greeks, who derived this custom from the ancient Ægyptians, the wisest, best policy'd, and most learned nation then upon earth. The practice, indeed, was very consistent with reason: the chief end and design of history being then no more than to transmit the memory of a few great men to posterity, as examples for it: they never thought in those times of giving the history of a convent, or a petty town, in folio volumes:

volumes : they only wrote then what was worthy to be read, and fit to be got by heart ; and therefore availed themselves of the harmony of verse to assist the memory ; for this reason the first philosophers, legislators, founders of religious sects, and historians, were all poets.

It may be objected, that poetry, on such subjects, must be deficient, either in harmony or precision ; but as we know that Virgil united these excellencies, however seemingly incompatible, and that Despreaux and Racine have written like Virgil ; how can a man, who has read them all three, and knows they have been translated into almost every language in Europe, depreciate in this manner a talent, which has reflected so much honour even on himself ? I place Despreaux and Racine on a level with Virgil, with regard to the merit of versification ; because, if the author of the *Æneid* had been born at Paris, he would have wrote in rhyme as they did : and if these two illustrious Frenchmen had lived in the time of Augustus, they would have made the same use which Virgil did of the Latin measure. When M. de la Motte therefore calls versification a mechanical and ridiculous labour, he condemns not only all our own great poets, but all the poets of antiquity also. Virgil and Horace submitted to this mechanical labour,

as well as modern writers: a happy arrangement of dactyles and spondees was as much trouble to them, as our rhymes and hemistichs are to us, and the task, no doubt, must have been laborious, since we find the *Æneid*, after eleven years toil, was not even then brought to perfection.

Mr. de la Motte affirms, that, at least, a tragedy put into prose will lose no part of its strength or beauty. To prove this, he has himself prosified the first scene of *Mithridates*, and nobody can bear to read it: he does not consider, that the true merit of verse is to be as natural and correct as prose: it is the surmounting this great difficulty, that gives every good judge such exquisite pleasure; but reduce them to prose, and there is no longer any merit or any satisfaction in them. But our neighbours, says he, never write tragedies in rhyme: true; but they are notwithstanding in verse, because harmony is agreeable to every nation. It only remains then to determine, whether our verses should be in rhyme or not. Corneille and Racine wrote in rhyme. If we are desirous of striking into a new path, it is not so much perhaps from our love of novelty, as because we find ourselves unable to keep up with these great men in the old one. The English and Italians may do without rhyme, as their language has more variety, and their poetry a
thousand

thousand more liberties than ours. The genius and power of every language is determined by the peculiar construction of its phrases, the number of its vowels and consonants, its inversions, its auxiliary verbs, &c. Elegance and perspicuity are the distinguishing characteristics of the French tongue; we allow no licence to our poetry, which is obliged, like our prose, to follow the precise order of our ideas; we are therefore under the absolute necessity of employing the repetition of the same sounds, to prevent our poetry being confounded with our prose. The following verses are well known.

Où me cacher? fuyons dans la nuit infernale.
 Mais que dis-je? mon pere y tient l'urne fatale:
 Le fort, dit on, l'a mise en ses sévères mains;
 Minos juge aux enfers les pâles humains.

But if we read them thus,

Où me cacher? fuyons dans la nuit infernale.
 Mais que dis-je? mon pere y tient l'urne funeste:
 Le fort, dit on, l'a mise en ses severes mains;
 Minos juge aux enfers tous les pâles mortels.

How poetical soever this may be, will it give us the same pleasure when thus put out of rhyme? The English

glish and Italians would say, after the Greeks and Romans,

Pale mortals Minos in the shades doth judge ;

Or perhaps run the sense gracefully into the next verse. Add to this, that their manner of repeating verses expresses the long or short syllables, and thus preserves the harmony without the assistance of rhyme ; but why should we, who have none of these advantages, part from those few, which the nature of our language has bestowed upon us ?

M. de la Motte compares our poets, that is to say, Corneille, Racine and Despreaux, to the makers of acrosticks, and to a mountebank that draws millet through the eye of a needle ; and adds, that all these puerilities have no merit, but what arises from the difficulty that attends the performance of them. I acknowledge that bad verses are nothing more than this ; they only differ from bad prose in the rhyme, and rhyme alone can never constitute the merit of the poet, nor the pleasure of the reader. It is not the dactyles and spondees of Virgil and Homer that delight us ; it is the enchanting harmony, which arises from the perfection of this very difficult measure. He who endeavours to overcome a difficulty, merely to have the merit of overcoming it, is a fool ; but he

that

that can draw forth, even from these very obstacles, beauties, that will please universally, must be a wise and sensible man, and indeed almost singular. It is a very arduous task to make good pictures, good statues, good music, or good verses; and the names of those illustrious men, therefore, who have been able to perform this task, will remain, perhaps, much longer than the kingdoms where they were born.

I might take this opportunity of disputing with Mr. de la Motte with relation to some other points; but this might carry with it the air of a personal attack upon him, and lay me open to the suspicion of malignity, which I am as far from entertaining, as I am from adopting his sentiments. I had much rather avail myself of the many fine and judicious reflections scattered over his works, than engage in the refutation of some of them, which appeared to me more controvertible than others. I am satisfied with endeavouring to defend an art which I love, and which he himself ought to have defended.

I will only add a word (with leave of Mr. de la Faye) concerning the ode in favour of harmony, where that gentleman attacks Mr. de la Motte's system in some very fine verses, which are answered by him in prose. In the following stanzas Mr. de la Faye has collected almost all the arguments, which

I have here made use of, with great force of imagination, and in charming poetry :

Rules seem severe, and yet are but the art
To please, and sink still deeper in the heart ;
By rigid laws restrain'd, the poet's mind
Springs with more active force as more confin'd ;
So waters press'd in narrow fountains, rise,
Play in the air, and seem to touch the skies.

I never met with a comparison more just, more elegant, or better expressed. Mr. de la Motte, who should have answered these verses by imitating them, sets himself about examining, whether the pipes are the cause of the waters rising, or whether it is the height from whence it falls that determines the degree of its elevation. Besides (says he) ‘ where shall we find in verse, more than in prose, this extraordinary depth of thought, &c.’

I am afraid Mr. de la Motte is mistaken; considered in the light of a philosopher, because it is certain, that without that constraint of the water from the pipes, it would never rise at all, from whatever height it fell. But is he not still more mistaken as a poet? How came he not to perceive, that as the restriction of the measure of verses produces a harmony agreeable to the ear, so does that narrow receptacle which confines the water produce a jet-d'eau that is pleasing

pleasing to the sight. Is not the comparison equally just and beautiful? Mr. de la Faye, I own, has confuted la Motte in a much better manner than myself; he followed the example of the philosopher, who answered the sophist, that denied there was any such thing as motion, only by walking before him. Mr. de la Motte denies the harmony of verses; Mr. de la Faye sends him some verses full of harmony: this alone should teach me also to put an end to my prose.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

OEDIPUS, King of Thebes.

JOCASTA, Queen of Thebes.

PHILOCTETES, Prince of Eubæa.

HIGH-PRIEST.

ARASPES, Confident of Oedipus.

EGINA, Confidente of Jocasta.

DIMAS, Friend of Philoctetes.

PHORBAS, an old Man of Thebes.

ICARUS, an old Man of Corinth.

CHORUS of THEBANS.

SCENE THEBES.

OEDIPUS.

O E D I P U S.

A

T R A G E D Y.

ACT I. SCENE I.

PHILOCTETES, DIMAS.

DIMAS.

IS it my friend, my Philoctetes? Whence
 And wherefore com'st thou to distemper'd Thebes
 In search of death, to brave the wrath of heav'n?
 For, know, the gods on this devoted land
 Wreak their full vengeance: mortals dare not tread
 The guilty soil, to death and horror long
 Consign'd, and from the living world cut off:
 Away; be gone.

PHILOCTETES.

It suits a wretch like me:
 Leave me, my friend, to my unhappy fate;

And only tell me, if the wrath divine
Hath, in its rapid progress, spar'd the queen.

DIMAS.

Jocasta lives; but round her throne still spreads
'The dire contagion; ev'ry fatal moment
Deprives her of some faithful subject: death
Steals closer by degrees, and seems to threat
Her sacred life. But heav'n, we trust, will soon
Withdraw its vengeful arm: such scenes of blood
Will sure appease its rage.

PHILOCTETES.

What horrid crime
Cou'd bring down so severe a punishment?

DIMAS.

Since the king's death——

PHILOCTETES.

The king! ha! Laius—

DIMAS.

Dy'd

Some four years since.

PHILOCTETES.

Ha! Laius dead! indeed!

What sweet seducing hope awakes my soul?

Jocasta! will the gods at length be kind?

May

May Philoctetes still be thine? But say,
Dimas, how fell the king?

DIMAS.

'Tis four years since
For the last time towards Bæotia, led
By fate, you came; scarce had you bent your way
To Asia, e'er th' unhappy Laius fell
By some base hand.

PHILOCTETES.

Assassinated, say'st thou?

DIMAS.

This was the cause, ~~the source of all our ills,~~
The ruin of this wretched country: shock'd
At the sad stroke, we wept the gen'ral loss,
When lo! the minister of wrath divine,
(Fatal to innocence, and fav'ring long
Unpunish'd guilt) a dreadful monster came,
(O Philoctetes, wou'd thou had'st been here!)
And ravag'd all our borders, horrid form!
Made for destruction by avenging heav'n,
With human voice, an eagle, woman, lion,
Unnat'ral mixture! rage with cunning join'd
United to destroy us: nought remain'd
To save but this alone; in phrase obscure

The monster had propos'd t' affrighted Thebes
 A strange ænigma, which who could unfold
 Shou'd save his country; if he fail'd, must dye.
 Reluctant we obey'd the hard decree.

Instant the gen'ral voice aloud proclaim'd
 The kingdom his reward, who, by the gods
 Inspir'd, shou'd first unveil the mystery.

The aged and the wise, by hope misled,
 With fruitless science brav'd the monster's rage;
 Vain knowledge all! all try'd, and trying fell,
 Till Oedipus, the heir to Corinth's throne,
 Endow'd with wisdom far above his years,

~~Fearless, and led by fortune,~~ came, beheld,

Unfolded all, and took the great reward;
 Lives still, and reigns o'er Thebes; but reigns, alas!
 O'er dying subjects, and a desert land.

Vainly we hoped to see the wayward fates
 Chain'd to his throne, and yielding to the hand
 Of Oedipus, our great deliverer.

A little time the gods propitious smiled,
 And blest'd us with a gleam of transient peace;
 But barrenness and famine soon destroy'd
 Our airy hopes: ills heap'd on ills succeed,
 A dreadful plague unpeoples half the realms
 Of sickly Thebes, snatching the poor remains

Just 'scap'd from famine and the grave: high heav'n
Hath thus ordain'd, and such our hapless fate.
But say, illustrious hero, whom the gods
Have long approv'd, say, wherefore hast thou left
The paths of glory, and the smiles of fortune,
To seek the regions of affliction here?

PHILOCTETES.

I come to join my sorrows and my tears,
For know the world with me hath lost its best
And noblest friend: ne'er shall these eyes behold
The offspring of the gods, like them unconquer'd,
Earth's best support, the guardian deity
Of innocence oppress'd: I mourn a friend,
The world a father.

DIMAS.

Is Alcides dead?

PHILOCTETES.

These hands perform'd the melancholy office,
Laid on his fun'ral pile the first of men;
Th' all-conquering arrows, those dear dreadful gifts
The son of Jove bequeath'd me, have I brought,
With his cold ashes, here, where I will raise
A tomb and altars to my valued friend.
O! had he liv'd! had but indulgent heav'n,

In pity to mankind, prolong'd his days,
Far from Jocasta I had still remain'd ;
And, tho' I might have cherish'd still my vain
And hopeless passion, had not wander'd here,
Or left Alcides for a woman's love.

D I M A S.

Oft have I pity'd thy unhappy flame,
Caught in thy earliest youth, increasing still
And growing with thy growth : Jocasta, forc'd
By a hard father to a hateful bed,
Unwillingly partook the throne of Laius.
Alas ! what tears those fatal nuptials cost,
What sorrows have they brought on wretched Thebes !
How have I oft admir'd thy noble soul,
Worthy of empire ! conqu'ror o'er thyself :
There first the hero shone, repres'd his passion,
And the first tyrant he subdued was love.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

There we must fly to conquer ; I confess it :
Long time I strove, I felt my weakness long ;
At length resolv'd to shun the fatal place,
I took a last farewell of my Jocasta.
The world then trembled at Alcides' name,
And on his valour did suspend their fate ;
I join'd the god-like man, partook his toils,

March'd

March'd by his side, and twin'd his laurel wreath
Round my own brows : then my enlighten'd soul
Against the passions arm'd, and rose superior.
A great man's friendship is the gift of heav'n.
In him I read my duty and my fate ;
I bound myself to virtue and to him :
My valour strengthen'd, and my heart improv'd,
Not hardened, I became like my Alcides.
What had I been without him ! a king's son,
A common prince, the slave of ev'ry passion,
Which Hercules hath taught me to subdue.

DIMAS.

Now then unmov'd thou can'st behold Jocasta,
And her new husband.

PHILOCTETES.

Ha ! another husband !

Said'st thou, another ?

DIMAS.

Oedipus hath join'd

To her's his future fate.

PHILOCTETES.

He is too happy ;

But he is worthy : he who sav'd a kingdom
Alone can merit her, and heav'n is just.

DIMAS.

He comes, and with him his assembled people ;
Lo ! the high-priest attends : this way they bend,
To deprecate the wrath of angry heav'n.

PHILOCTETES.

It melts my soul ; I weep for their misfortunes.
O Hercules, from thy eternal seat
Look down on thy afflicted country ! hear
Thy fellow citizens ! O hear thy friend,
Who joins his pray'rs, and be their guardian god !

S C E N E II.

HIGH-PRIEST, CHORUS.

FIRST PERSON OF THE CHORUS.

Ye blasting pow'rs, who waste this wretched empire,
And breath contagion, death, and horrors round us,
O quicken your slow wrath, be kind at last,
And urge our ling'ring fate.

SECOND PERSON OF THE CHORUS.

Strike, strike, ye gods,
Your victims are prepar'd ; ye mountains, fall !
Crush us, ye heav'ns ! O death, deliver us,
And we shall thank you for the boon.

HIGH

HIGH PRIEST.

No more :

Cease your loud complaints, the wretch's poor resource ;
 Yield to the pow'r supreme, who means to try
 His people by affliction ; with a word
 He can destroy, and with a word can save :
 He knows that death is here ; the cries of Thebes
 Have reach'd his throne. Behold ! the king ap-
 proaches,
 And heav'n by me declares its will divine ;
 The fates will soon to Oedipus unveil
 Their myst'ries all, and happier days succeed.

S C E N E I I I.

OEDIPUS, JOCASTA, HIGH PRIEST, EGINA,
 DIMAS, ARASPES, CHORUS.

OEDIPUS.

O ye, who to this hallow'd temple bring
 The mournful off'ring of your tears ; O what,
 What shall I say to my afflicted people ?
 Wou'd I cou'd turn the wrath of angry heav'n
 Against myself, and quench the deadly flame !
 But O ! in universal ills like these,
 Kings are but men, and only can partake
 The common danger. Say, thou minister

Of

Of the just gods, say, do they still refuse
 To hear the voice of misery ; still relentless
 Will they behold us perish, are they deaf
 And silent still ?

HIGH PRIEST.

King, people, listen all :

'This night did I behold the flame of heav'n
 Descending on our altars ; to my eyes
 The ghastly shade of Laius then appear'd,
 Indignant frown'd upon me, and thus spoke
 In fearful accents, terrible to hear :

“ The death of Laius is still unreveng'd,
 “ The murth'rer lives in Thebes, and doth infect
 “ The wholesome air with his malignant breath ;
 “ He must be known, he must be punished,
 “ And on his fate depends the people's safety.”

OEDIPUS.

Justly ye suffer, Thebans, for this crime ;
 Laius was once your lov'd and honour'd king,
 And your neglect hath from his manes drawn
 This vengeance on you. Such is oft the fate
 Of the best sov'reigns ; whilst they live, respect
 Waits on their laws, their justice is admir'd,
 And they like gods are serv'd, like gods ador'd ;

but

But after death they sink into oblivion.

No longer then your flatt'ring incense burns :

The servile mind of wretched man still bends

To int'rest ; and when virtue is departed,

'Tis soon forgotten : therefore doth the blood

Of murther'd Laius now cry out against you,

And sues for vengeance to offended heav'n.

To sprinkle on his tomb the murth'rer's blood

Will better far than slaughter'd hecatombs

Appease his spirit : be it all our care

To seek the guilty wretch. Can none remember

Aught touching this sad deed ? Amidst your signs

And wonders, cou'd no footsteps e'er be trac'd

Of this unpunish'd crime ? They always told me

It was a Theban, who against his Prince

Uplifted his rebellious hand. For me [*To Jocasta.*

Who from thy hands receiv'd the crown, two years

After the death of Laius did I mount

The throne of Thebes, and never since that hour

Wou'd I recall the subject of thy tears,

But in respectful silence waited still ;

Still have thy dangers busy'd all my soul,

Nor left me time to think on aught but thee.

JOCASTA.

JOCASTA.

When fate, which had reserv'd me for thy arms,
 Depriv'd me of my late unhappy lord;
 Who, journeying o'er his kingdom's frontiers, fell
 By base assassins, Phorbas then alone
 Attended him, his lov'd and valued friend;
 To whom the king, relying on his wisdom,
 Entrusted half his pow'r: he brought to Thebes
 The mangled corse: himself half dead with wounds,
 And bath'd in blood, fell at Jocasta's feet;
 " Villains unknown (he cry'd) have slain the king;
 " These eyes beheld it: I was dying too,
 " But heaven hath restor'd me to prolong
 " A wretched life." He said no more. My soul
 Distracted saw the melancholy truth
 Was still conceal'd; and therefore heav'n perhaps
 Conceal'd the murth'rer too; perhaps accomplish'd
 Its own eternal will, and made us guilty,
 That it might punish. Soon the sphinx appear'd,
 And laid our country waste: then hapless Thebes,
 Attentive to her safety, cou'd not think
 On Laius' fate, whilst trembling for her own.

CEDIPUS.

Where is that faithful Phorbas? lives he still?

JOCASTA.

JOCASTA.

Alas ! his zeal and service ill repaid,
Too pow'rful to be lov'd, the jealous state
His secret foe, nobles and people join'd
To punish him for past felicity.
The multitude accus'd him, ev'n demanded
Of me his death : fore press'd on ev'ry side,
I knew not how to pardon or condemn,
But to a neighbouring castle I convey'd him,
And hid the guiltless victim from their rage.
There four long winters hath the poor old man,
To future favorites a sad example,
Without a murmur or complaint remain'd,
And hopes from innocence alone release.

OEDIPUS.

It is enough, Jocasta. Fly, begone,

[To his servants.]

Open the prison, bring him hither strait,
We will examine him before you all ;
Laius and Thebes shall be aveng'd together :
Yes, we will hear and judge, will sound the depth
Of this strange mystery. Ye gods of Thebes,
Who hear our pray'rs, and know the murth'rer, now
Reveal, and punish ; and thou, Sun, with-hold

From

From his dark eyes thy bleſſed light ! proſcrib'd,
Abandon'd, let him wander o'er the earth
A wretched miſcreant, by his ſons abhorr'd,
And to his mother horrible ! depriv'd
Of burial, let his body be the prey
Of hungry vultures !

HIGH PRIEST.

In theſe execrations

We all unite.

OEDIPUS.

Gods ! let the guilty ſuffer,
And they alone ! or if the high decrees
Of your eternal juſtice leave to me
His puniſhment, at leaſt indulgent grant,
Where you command, the power to obey ;
If you purſue the guilty, O complete
The glorious work, and make the victim known !

[To the people.]

Return, my people, to the temple ; there
Once more entreat the gods : perhaps your pray'rs
May from their heav'nly manſions draw them down
To dwell amongſt us : if they lov'd the king,
They will avenge his death, and kind to him

Who

Who errs unknowing, will direct this arm
For justice rais'd, and teach me where to strike.

The END of the FIRST ACT.

ACT II. SCENE I.

JOCASTA, EGINA, ARASPES, CHORUS.

ARASPES.

BELIEVE me, 'tis too true, my royal mistress,
Your dying people, with one common voice,
Accuse the hapless Philoctetes : fate
Hath sent him back to save this wretched kingdom.

JOCASTA.

What do I hear, ye pow'rs ?

EGINA.

'Tis wonderful.

JOCASTA.

Who ? Philoctetes ?

ARASPES.

Yes, it must be he :

To whom can we impute it but to him ?
When last at Thebes, he seem'd to meditate
A deed like this ; for much he hated Laius :

From

From Oedipus his trait'rous purpose scarce
Cou'd he conceal ; for soon unwary youth
Betrays itself : soon thro' the thin disguise
Of ill dissembled loyalty, we saw
The rancour of his heart. I know not what
Provok'd him, but too warm and open, ever
The slave of passion, he wou'd kindle oft
At the king's name, and often pour forth threats
Of vengeance : for some time he left the kingdom,
But fate soon brought the restless wand'rer back ;
And at that fatal time, which heav'n distinguish'd
By the detested shocking parricide,
~~He was at~~ Thebes : e'er since that dreadful hour,
Suspicion justly falls on Philoctetes :
But the high name which he had gain'd in war,
His boasted title of earth's great avenger,
And his heroic deeds, have stopp'd the tongue
Of clamour, and suspended yet the stroke
Of our resentment. Now the time is come
When Thebes shall think no more of vain respect ;
His glory and his conquests plead no more ;
The hearts of an oppress'd people groan ;
The gods require his blood, and must be heard.

CHORUS.

O E D I P U S.

CHORUS.

O queen ! have pity on a wretched people,
Who love and honour thee, revere the gods,
And follow their example ; yield up to us
Their victim, and present our vows to heav'n ;
For heav'n will hear them, if they come from thee.

JOCASTA.

O ! if my life can mitigate its wrath,
I give it freely ; take the sacrifice ;
Accept my blood ; but O ! demand no more.
Thebans, be gone.

S C E N E II.

JOCASTA, EGINA.

EGINA.

How I lament thy fate !

JOCASTA.

Alas ! I envy those whom death has freed
From all their cares : but what remains for me,
What pain and torment to a virtuous heart !

EGINA.

'Tis terrible indeed : the clam'rous people,
Warm'd with false zeal, will cry aloud for vengeance,
And soon demand their victim. I forbear

T'accuse

From Oedipus his trait'rous purpose scarce
Cou'd he conceal ; for soon unwary youth
Betrays itself : soon thro' the thin disguise
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The rancour of his heart. I know not what
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And soon demand their victim. I forbear

T'accuse

T'accuse him ; but if he at last thou'd prove
The murderer of thy unhappy Lord,
How it must shock thy soul !

J O C A S T A.

Impossible !

Such guilt and baseness never dwelt in him.
O my Egina ! since our bonds of love
Were disunited, nought has pierc'd my heart
Like this suspicion : this alone was wanting
To make Jocasta most completely wretched :
But I'll not bear to hear him thus accus'd ;
I lov'd him, and he must be innocent.

E G I N A.

That constant love.—

J O C A S T A.

Nay, think not that my
Still nourishes a guilty passion for him ;
I conquer'd that long since ; yet, dear Egina,
Howe'er the soul may act which virtue guides,
Its secret motions, nature's children, still
Must force their way : they will not be subdu'd,
But in the folds and windings of the heart,
Lurk still, and rush upon us ; hid in fires
We thought extinguish'd, from their ashes rise :

In the hard conflict, rigid virtue may
Resist the passions, but can ne'er destroy them.

EGINA.

How just, and yet how noble is thy grief!
Such sentiments!——

JOCASTA.

Jocasta is most wretched;
Thou know'st my mis'ries, and thou know'st my heart,
Egina: twice hath Hymen lit his torch
For me, and twice hath chang'd my slavery,
For such it was; the only man I lov'd,
Torn from my arms. Forgive me, ye just gods,
The sad remembrance of a conquer'd passion.
Egina, thou wert witness of our loves,
Those ties, alas! dissolv'd as soon as made:
Then Oedipus, my sovereign, fought and gain'd me,
heart Spite of myself. I took the diadem,
Begirt with sorrows. To forget the past
Became my duty then, and I obey'd.
Thou know'st I stifled ev'ry tender thought
Of my first love, disguis'd an aching heart,
Drank up my tears, and even from myself
Strove to conceal my griefs.

EGINA.

How cou'd you venture
In The dang'rous trial of a second marriage?

JOCASTA.

JOCASTA.

Alas !

EGINA.

Will you forgive me ? shall I speak ?

JOCASTA.

Thou may'st.

EGINA.

The king, the conqueror subdu'd thee
You gave your hand as a reward to him
Who sav'd your country.

JOCASTA.

Gracious gods !

EGINA.

Was he
Happier than Laius ? Was your Philoctetes
Forgotten then, or did they share your heart ?

JOCASTA.

Thebes, by a cruel monster then laid waste,
Had promis'd its deliverer my hand ;
The conqu'ror of the sphinx was worthy of me.

EGINA.

You lov'd him then ?

JOCASTA.

I felt some tenderness
For Oedipus ; but O ! 'twas far from love :

'Twas not, Egina, that tumultuous passion,
Th' impetuous offspring of my ravish'd senses,
Not the fierce flame that burn'd for Philoctetes;
Who, by his fatal charms, subdu'd my reason,
And pour'd love's sweetest poison o'er my heart:
Friendship sincere was all I cou'd bestow
On Oedipus, for much I priz'd his virtue;
And pleas'd, beheld him mount the throne of Thebes
Which he had sav'd; but, whilst I follow'd him,
Ev'n at the altar, my affrighted soul,
Wherefore I knew not, was most strangely mov'd,
And I retir'd with horror to his arms.
To this a dreadful omen did succeed:
Methought, Egina, in the dead of night,
I saw the gulph of hell yawn wide before me;
When lo! the spirit of my murther'd Lord,
Bloody and pale, with threat'ning aspect stood,
And pointed to my son; that son, Egina,
Which I to Laius bore, and to the gods
Offer'd, a cruel pious sacrifice.
They beckon'd me to follow them, and seem'd
To drag me with them to the horrid gloom
Of Tartarus: my troubled soul long kept
The sad idea, and must keep it ever.
Now Philoctetes doubles ev'ry woe.

EGINA.

EGINA.

I heard a noise that way, and, see he comes.

JOCASTA.

'Tis he ; I tremble : but I will avoid him.

S C E N E III.

JOCASTA, PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

Do not avoid me, do not fly, Jocasta,
From Philoctetes ; turn, and look upon me :
O ! speak to me, nor fear my jealous tears
Shou'd interrupt the new-born happiness
Of thy late nuptials : think not that I came
To cast reproaches on thee, or with sighs
To win thy lost affection : vulgar arts,
Unworthy of us both ! the heart, Jocasta,
'That burn'd for thee, and if I may recall
Thy plighted faith, was once not hateful to thee,
Has learn'd, from thy example, not to feel
Weakness like that.

JOCASTA.

I must approve thy conduct,
And 'tis but fit I vindicate my own :
I lov'd thee, Philoctetes ; but my fate

Tore me from thee, and gave me to another.
 Thou know'st what woes the horrid sphinx, by heav'n
 Appointed to afflict us, brought on Thebes :
 Too well thou know'st that Oedipus——

PHILOCTETES.

Is thine ;

I know it, and is worthy of the blessing :
 Young as he was, his wisdom sav'd thy country ;
 His virtues, his fair deeds, and what still more
 Exalted him, Jocasta's love, have rank'd
 Thy Oedipus among the first of men.
 Wherefore did cruel fortune, still resolv'd
 To punish Philoctetes, drive me hence,
 To seek vain trophies in a distant land ?
 O ! if the conqueror of the sphinx was doom'd
 To conquer thee, why was not I at Thebes ?
 I'd not have labour'd in the fruitless search
 Of idle myst'ries, wrapp'd in words of darkness ;
 This arm, to conquest long beneath thy smiles
 Accustom'd, should have drawn the vengeful sword,
 And laid the howling monster at thy feet.
 But O ! a happier arm has wrested from me
 That noblest triumph, and deserv'd Jocasta.

JOCASTA.

Alas ! thou know'st not yet what ills await thee.

PHILOCTETES.

Thee and Alcides I have lost already :
Is there aught more to fear ?

JOCASTA.

Thou dwell'st at Thebes,
The detestation of avenging gods ;
The baneful pestilence stalks forth amongst us ;
The blood of Laius cries aloud, and heav'n
Pursues us still : the murderer must bleed ;
He has been sought for ; some have dar'd to say
That he is found, and call him Philoctetes.

PHILOCTETES.

Astonishment ! the base suspicion shocks
My soul, and bids my tongue be silent ever
On the opprobrious theme : accus'd of murder !
Murth'ring thy husband ! thou can'st ne'er believe it.

JOCASTA.

O ! never ! 'twere injurious to thy honour
To combat such imposture, or refute
The vile aspersions : no, thou know'st my heart,
Thou had'st my love, and could'st not do a deed
Unworthy of it. Let them perish all,
These worthless Thebans, who deserve their fate
For thus suspecting thee : but, hence ! begone !

Our

Our vows are fruitless : heav'n reserves for thee
 Superior blessings. Thou wert born to serve
 The gods, whose wisdom wou'd not bury here
 Virtues like thine, or suffer love to rule
 A heart design'd for universal sway,
 And courage fit to save and bless mankind.
 Ill wou'd it suit the follower of Alcides
 To lose his moments in the fond concerns,
 The little cares of love. Thy hours are due
 To the unhappy and the injur'd : they
 Will all thy time, and all thy virtue claim.
 Already tyrants throng on ev'ry side ;
 Alcides dead, new monsters rise ; go, thou,
 And give the world another Hercules.
 Oedipus comes ; permit me to retire ;
 Not that I fear the weakness of my heart,
 But as Jocasta lov'd thee once, and he
 Is now my husband, I shou'd blush before you.

S C E N E IV.

OEDIPUS, PHILOCTETES, ARASPES.

OEDIPUS.

Say'st thou, Araspes, is he here, the prince,
 The noble Philoctetes ?

PHILOCTETES.

Yes, 'tis he ;

Led by blind fortune to this hapless clime,
Where angry heav'n hath made me suffer wrongs
I am not us'd to bear. I know the crimes
Laid to my charge ; but think not that I mean
To justify myself: too well I know thee
To think that Oedipus wou'd ever stoop
To such low mean suspicions: no ! thy fame
Is mix'd with mine, in the same steps of honour
We trod together. Theseus, Hercules,
And Philoctetes, pointed out to thee
The paths of glory ; do not then disgrace
Their names, and taint thy own, by calumny,
But keep their bright examples still before thee.

OEDIPUS.

All that I wish is but to save my country,
And if I can be useful to mankind,
This is th' ambition I wou'd satisfy,
And this the lesson which those heroes taught,
Whom thou hast follow'd, and whom I admire.
I meant not to accuse thee : had I chose
The people's victim, it had been myself.
I think it but the duty of a king

To perish for his country : 'tis an honour
'Too great for common men. Then had I sav'd
Once more my Thebans, yielded up my life,
And shelter'd thine : but 'twas not in my pow'r.
The blood of guilt must flow, thou stand'st accused.
Defend thyself : if thou art innocent,
None shall rejoice so much as Oedipus ;
Nor as a criminal shall then receive thee,
But as my noble friend, as Philoctetes.

PHILOCTETES.

I thought myself, indeed, above suspicion :
From many a base assassin has this arm,
While Jove's dread thunder slept, reliev'd mankind.
Whom we chastise, we seldom imitate.

OEDIPUS.

I do not think thou would'st disgrace thy name,
And thy fair martial deeds, by such a crime.
If Laius fell by thee, he fell with honour,
I doubt it not, for I must do thee justice.

PHILOCTETES.

If I had slain him, I had only gain'd
One added triumph. Kings, indeed, are gods
To their own subjects, but to Hercules,
Or me, they were no more than common men.

I have aveng'd the wrongs of mighty princes ;
And, therefore, little, thou may'st think, shou'd fear
T' attack the bravest.

OEDIPUS.

Heroes, like thyself,
Are equal ev'n to kings, I know they are :
But still remember, prince, whoe'er slew Laius,
His head must answer for the woes of Thebes ;
And thou.—

PHILOCTETES.

I slew him not ; let that suffice.
If I had done the deed, I wou'd have own'd,
Nay boasted of it. Hear me, Oedipus,
Though vulgar souls, by vulgar methods, deign
To vindicate their injur'd honour ; kings
And heroes, when they speak, expect, no doubt,
To be believ'd : perhaps thou dost suspect
I murder'd Laius. It becomes not thee,
Of all men, to accuse me : to thy hand
Devolv'd his sceptre and his queen. Who reap'd
The fruits of Laius's death, but Oedipus ?
Who took the spoils ? Who fill'd his throne ? Not I :
That object never tempted Philoctetes :

Alcides

Alcides never wou'd accept a crown :
We knew no master, and desir'd no subjects :
I have made kings, but never wish'd to be one,
But 'tis beneath me to refute the falsehood,
For innocence is lessen'd by defence.

OEDIPUS.

Thy pride offends me, whilst thy virtue charms.
If thou art guiltless, thou hast nought to fear
From justice and the laws ; thy innocence
Will shine with double splendor : dwell with us,
And wait th' event.

PHILOCTETES.

My honour is concern'd,
And therefore I shall stay ; nor hence depart
Till I have ample vengeance for the wrongs
Thy base suspicions cast on Philoctetes.

S C E N E V.

OEDIPUS, ARASPES.

OEDIPUS.

Araspes, I can never think him guilty :
A heart like his, intrepid, brave, and fearless,
Cou'd never stoop to mean disguise ; nor thoughts
So noble e'er inspire the timid breast

Of falsehood : no ! such baseness is far from him :
I even blush'd t'accuse him, and condemn'd
My own injustice : hard and cruel fate
Of royalty ! alas ! kings cannot read
The hearts of men, and oft on innocence,
Spite of ourselves unjust, inflict the pains
Due to the guilty. How this Phorbas lingers !
In him alone are all my hopes : the gods
Refuse to hear or answer to our vows ;
Their silence shows how much they are offended.

A P A S P E S.

Rely then on thyself : the gods, whose aid
This priest hath promis'd, do not always dwell
Within their temples ; tripods, caves, and cells,
The brazen mouths that pour forth oracles,
Which men had fram'd, by men may be inspir'd ;
We must not rest our faith on priests alone ;
Ev'n in the sanctuary traitors oft
May lurk unseen, exert their pious arts
T'enslave mankind, and bid the destinies
Speak or be silent just as they command them.
Search then, and find the truth, examine all ;
Phorbas, and Philoctetes, and Jocasta.
Trust to yourself ; let our own eyes determine ;
Be they our tripods, oracles, and gods.

O E D I P U S.

OEDIPUS.

Within the temple, think'st thou, perfidy
 Like this can dwell: but if just heav'n at last
 Shou'd fix our fate, and Oedipus be call'd
 To execute its will, he will receive
 The precious trust, the safety of his country,
 Nor act unworthy of it. To the gods
 Once more I go, and with incessant pray'r
 Will try to sooth their anger: thou, mean time,
 If thou woud'st wish to serve me, hasten onward
 The ling'ring Phorbas; in our hapless state,
 I must enquire the truth of gods and men.

The END of the SECOND ACT.

A C T III. SCENE I.

JOCASTA, EGINA.

JOCASTA.

YES, my Egina, I expect him here;
 'Tis the last time these eyes shall e'er behold
 The wretched Philoctetes.

EGINA.

Thou hast heard,
 My royal mistress, to what des'prate height

The clam'rous people carry their resentment ;
 Our dying Thebans from his punishment
 Expect their safety. Old men, women, children,
 United by misfortunes, breath forth vengeance ;
 Pronounce him guilty, and cry out that heav'n
 Demands his blood : can'st thou resist the torrent,
 Defend, or save him ?

JOCASTA.

Yes : I will defend him ;
 Even though Thebes shou'd lift the murth'rous hand
 Against her queen, beneath her smoaking walls
 To crush Jocasta, ne'er wou'd I betray
 Such injur'd innocence ; but still I fear
 The tongue of slander : well thou know'st my heart
 Once sigh'd for Philoctetes ; now, Egina,
 Will they not say I sacrifice to him
 My fame, my gods, my country, and my husband ?
 Will they not say Jocasta loves him still ?

EGINA.

Calm thy vain fears ; thy passion had no witness
 But me, and never——

JOCASTA.

Think'st thou that a princess
 Can e'er conceal her hatred or her love ?

O no ! on ev'ry side the eager eyes
Of courtiers look upon us : thro' the veil
Of feign'd respect, with subtle treachery
They search our hearts, and trace out ev'ry weakness.
Nought can escape their sharp malignant sight ;
A little word, a sigh, or glance betrays us ;
Our very silence shall be made to speak
Our thoughts ; and when their busy artifice,
Spite of ourselves, hath drawn the secret from us,
Then their loud censures cast invidious light
O'er all our actions, and th'instructed world
Is quickly taught to eccho ev'ry weakness.

EGINA.

But what hast thou to fear from calumny ?
What piercing eye can wound Jocasta's fame ?
Who knows thy love, will know thy conquest o'er it ;
Will know thy virtue still supported thee.

JOCASTA.

It is that virtue which distresses me ;
I look, perhaps, with too severe an eye
On my own weakness, and accuse myself
Unjustly ; but the image still remains
Of Philoctetes, 'grav'd within my heart
Too deep for time or virtue to efface it ;

And

And much I doubt, if when I strive to save him,
 I act not less from justice than from love:
 My pity hath too much of tenderneſs;
 I tremble oft, and oft reproach myself
 For my fond care; I cou'd be more his friend,
 If he had been leſs dear to me.

EGINA.

But ſay,

Is it your will that he depart?

JOCASTA.

It is:

And O! if he would liſten to Jocasta,
 Never return, never behold me more;
 Fly from this fatal, this diſtreſſful ſcene,
 And ſave my life and fame. But what detains him?
 Why haſtes he not? Egina, fly—

SCENE II.

PHILOCTETES, EGINA, JOCATA.

JOCATA.

He's here.

O Prince, my ſoul is on the rack; I bluſh
 To ſee the man whom duty bids me ſhun,
 Which ſays I ſhould forget and not betray thee.

Doubtleſs

Doubtless thou know'st the dreadful fate that hangs
O'er thy devoted head.

PHILOCTETES.

The clam'rous people
Demand my life; but they have suffer'd much,
And therefore, tho' unjust, I pity them.

JOCASTA.

Yield not thyself a victim to their rage:
Away, begone; as yet thou art thyself
The master of thy fate; but this perhaps
Is the last minute that can give me pow'r
To save thee: far, O fly far from Jocasta,
And, in return for added life, I beg thee
But to forget 'twas I who thus preserv'd it.

PHILOCTETES.

I cou'd have wish'd, Jocasta, thou had'st shewn
More strength of mind, and less compassion for me;
Prefer'd with me my honour to my life,
And rather bade me dye than meanly quit
My station here: I yet am innocent,
But in obeying thee I should be guilty.
Of all the blessings heav'n bestow'd upon me,
My honour and my fame alone remain
Untouch'd, O! do not rob me of a treasure

So

So precious to me ; do not make me thus
Unworthy of Jocasta. I have liv'd,
Liv'd to fulfil the fate allotted to me ;
Have pass'd my sacred word to Oedipus,
And whatsoe'er suspicions he may cherish,
I am a stranger to the breach of honour.

JOCASTA.

O Philoctetes, let me here intreat thee,
By the just gods, by that ill-fated passion,
Which once inspir'd thy breast, if aught remains
Of tender friendship, if thou still remember'st
How much my happiness on thine depended,
Deign to prolong a glorious life, and days
That should have been united with Jocasta's.

PHILOCTETES.

To thee devoted I wou'd have them still
In equal tenor flow, and worthy of thee ;
I've liv'd far from thee, and shall die content,
If thy regard attends me to the tomb.
Who knows but heav'n may yet refuse to see
This bloody sacrifice ; perhaps, in mercy
It guided me to Thebes to save Jocasta ;
Shorten'd my days, perhaps, to lengthen thine.
Happy event ! the blood of innocence
May be accepted ; mine is not unworthy.

S C E N E I I I.

OEDIPUS, JOCASTA, PHILOCTETES, EGINA,
ARASPES, with ATTENDANTS.

OEDIPUS.

Fear not the clamours of an idle crowd,
That rage tumultuous, and demand thy death :
Know, Philoctetes, I have calm'd their rage,
And will myself, if needful, be thy guard.
I judge not with the hasty multitude,
But wish to see thy innocence appear :
My doubtful mind, uncertain where to fix,
Nor dares or to condemn, or to acquit thee :
Heav'n can alone determine all, which hears
My ardent pray'r ; at length it seems pleas'd,
And by its priest shall soon point out the victim.
'The gods shall soon decide 'twixt Thebes and thee.

PHILOCTETES.

Great is thy love of truth, O king, but know
Justice extreme is height of injury ;
We must not always hearken to the voice
Of rigour : honour is the first of laws,
Let us observe it. But thou seest me sunk
Beneath myself, answer'ing the slanderous tongues
Of base defamers, whom I shou'd despise.

O let not Oedipus unite with such
 To ruin my fair fame ! it is enough
 That I deny it ; 'tis enough to call
 My life before thee. Let Alcides come,
 And bring with him the monsters I destroy'd,
 The tyrants I subdued ; let these stand forth
 My witnesses, and let my enemies confute them.
 But ask your priest whether his gods condemn me ;
 I'll wait their sentence ; not because I fear it,
 But to preserve thy persecuted people.

S C E N E IV.

OEDIPUS, JOCASTA, HIGH PRIEST, ARASPES,
 PHILOCTETES, EGINA, ATTENDANTS,
 CHORUS.

OEDIPUS.

Will heav'n at last indulgent to our pray'rs
 Withdraw its vengeance ? By what murth'rous hand
 Was it offended ?

PHILOCTETES.

Speak, whose blood must flow
 For expiation ?

HIGH PRIEST.

Fatal gift of heav'n !
 Unhappy knowledge ! to what dangers oft

Dost thou betray the heart of curious man!
O wou'd that fate, thus open to my view,
Had o'er its secrets drawn th'eternal veil
To hide them from my sight!

PHILOCTETES.

What evil bring'st thou?

OEDIPUS.

Com'st thou the minister of wrath divine?

PHILOCTETES.

Fear nothing.

OEDIPUS.

Do the gods demand my life?

HIGH PRIEST.

If thou giv'st credit to me, ask me not.

OEDIPUS.

Whatever be the fate which heav'n decrees,
The safety of my country is concern'd,
And I will know it.

PHILOCTETES.

Speak.

OEDIPUS.

Have pity on us,

Pity th'afflicted, pity ———

HIGH

HIGH PRIEST.

Oedipus

Deserves more, much more, pity than his people.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

Oedipus loves them with paternal fondness;
To his we join our pray'rs. O! hear us thou
Interpreter of heav'n; now hear, and save!

SECOND PERSON OF THE CHORUS.

We dye, O! save us! turn aside the wrath
Of th' angry gods; name the perfidious monster!

LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

Name him, and soon the parricide shall dye.

HIGH PRIEST.

Unhappy men! why will ye press me thus?

LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

Speak but the word, he dies, and we are saved.

HIGH PRIEST.

O! ye will tremble but to hear his name,
When ye shall know what pangs he must endure.
The God, who speaks by me, in pity dooms him
To banishment alone; but dreadful ills
Await the murth'rer: driven to fell despair
His own rash hand shall to the wrath of heav'n
Add woes more deep and heavier punishment:

Ev'n

Ev'n you shall shudder at his fate, and own
Your safety purchas'd at a rate too dear.

OEDIPUS.

Obeys then.

PHILOCTETES.

Speak.

OEDIPUS.

Still obstinate!

HIGH PRIEST.

Remember,

If I must speak, that thou did'st force me to it.

OEDIPUS.

Insuff'rable delay! I'll bear no more.

HIGH PRIEST.

Since thou wilt hear it then, 'tis—

OEDIPUS.

Ha! speak, who?

HIGH PRIEST.

'Tis—Oedipus.

OEDIPUS.

I?

HIGH PRIEST.

Thou, unhappy Prince,

Thou art the man.

SECOND

SECOND PERSON OF THE CHORUS.

Alas! what do I hear!

JOCASTA.

Say, can it be, interpreter of heav'n? [*To Oedipus.*
Thou, Oedipus, the murth'rer of my husband!
To whom Jocasta yielded with herself
The throne of Thebes: the oracle is false;
I know it is; thy virtues must confute it.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

O! heav'n, whose pow'r decrees the fate of mortals,
O! name another, or to death devote us!

PHILOCTETES.

[*Turning to Oedipus*]

Think not I mean to render ill for ill;
Or from this strange reverse of fortune take
A mean advantage, to return the wrongs
I suffer'd from thy people and from thee:
No, Oedipus, I'll do thee noble justice,
That justice thou denyd'st to Philoctetes.
Spite of the gods, I think thee innocent,
And here I offer thee my willing hand
Against thy foes: I cannot hesitate

Which

Which I shou'd serve, a pontiff or a king.
 'Tis a priest's business, whoso'er he be,
 By whatsoever deity inspir'd,
 To pray for, not to curse, his royal master.

OEDIPUS.

Transcendent virtue ! execrable traitor !
 Here I behold a demi-god, and there
 A base impostor : see the glorious privilege
 Of altars ; thanks to their protecting veil,
 With lips profane thou hast abused the pow'r,
 Giv'n thee by heaven, to arraign thy king ;
 And yet thou think'st the sacred ministry
 Thou hast disgraced shall withhold my wrath :
 Traitor, thou should'st have perish'd at the altar
 Before those gods whose voice thou hast usurp'd.

HIGH PRIEST.

My life is in thy hands, and thou art now
 The master of my fate : seize then the time
 Whilst yet thou art so, for to-day thy doom
 Will be pronounc'd. Tremble, unhappy Prince,
 Thy reign is past ; a hand unseen suspends
 The fatal sword that glitters o'er thy head :
 Soon shall thy conscious soul with horror feel
 The weight of guilt ; soon shalt thou quit the throne,
 Where now thou sit'st secure, to wander forth

A wretched exile in a distant land ;
 Of wholesome water and of sacred fire
 Depriv'd, shalt take thy solitary way,
 And to the caves and hollow rocks complain.
 Where'er thou goest, a vengeful God shall still
 Pursue thy steps ; still shalt thou call on death,
 But call in vain : heav'n, that beholds thy fate,
 Shall hide itself in darkness from thy sight ;
 To guilt and sorrow doom'd, thou shalt regret
 Thy life, and wish that thou had'st ne'er been born.

OEDIPUS.

Thus far I have constrain'd my wrath, and heard thee.
 Priest, if thy blood were worthy of my sword,
 Thy life shou'd answer for this insolence :
 But hence, begone, nor urge my temper further,
 Thou author of abominable falsehood.

HIGH PRIEST.

Thou call'st me hypocrite, and base impostor ;
 Thy father thought not so.

OEDIPUS.

Who ? Polybus ?

My father, said'st thou ?

HIGH PRIEST.

Thou wilt know too soon
 Thy wretched fate : to day shall give thee birth ;

To day shall give thee death : unhappy man,
Tell me who gave thee birth, or say with whom
Thou liv'st, beset with sorrows and with crimes
For thee alone reserv'd. O Corinth ! Phocis !
Detested nuptials ! impious wretched race,
Too like its parent stem ! whose deadly rage
Shall fill the world with horror and amaze.
Farewell.

S C E N E V.

OEDIPUS, PHILOCTETES, JOCASTA.

OEDIPUS.

His last words fix me to the earth
Immoveable ; my passion is subsided ;
I know not where I am : me thinks some god
Descended from above to calm my rage ;
Who to his priest imparted pow'r divine,
And by his sacred voice pronounc'd my ruin.

PHILOCTETES.

If thou hadst nought t'oppose but king to king,
I wou'd have fought for Oedipus ; but know
That Priests are here more formidable foes,
Because respected, fear'd and honour'd more.
Supported by his oracles, the priest

Shall

Shall often make his sov'reign crouch beneath him ;
 Whilst his weak people, dragg'd in holy chains,
 Embrace the idol ; tread on sacred laws
 With pious zeal, and think they honour heav'n
 When they betray their master and their king :
 But above all, when int'rest, fruitful parent
 Of riot and licentiousness, increase
 Their impious rage, and back their insolence.

OEDIPUS.

Alas ! thy virtue doubles all my woes,
For great as my misfortunes is thy soul ;
Beneath the weight of care that hangs upon me,
Who strives to comfort can but more oppress.
What voice is this which from my inmost soul
Pours forth complaints ? What crime have I com-
mitted ?
Say, vengeful gods, is Oedipus so guilty ?

JOCASTA.

Talk not of guilt, my lord, your dying people
Demand a victim ; we must save our country ;
Delay it not : I was the wife of Laius,
And I alone shou'd perish : let me seek
The wand'ring spirit of my murther'd lord
On the infernal shore, and calm his rage :

Yes;

Yes, I will go : may the kind gods accept
My life, and ask no other sacrifice !
May thy Jocasta save her Oedipus !

OEDIPUS.

And woud'st thou dye ! are there not woes enough
Heap'd on this head ? O ! cease, my lov'd Jocasta,
This mournful language, I am sunk already
Too deep in grief without new miseries,
Without thy death to fill my cup of sorrow.
Let us go in : I must clear up a doubt
Too justly form'd, I fear : but follow me.

JOCASTA.

How could'st thou e'er, my lord——

OEDIPUS.

No more : come in,
And there confirm my terrors, or remove them.

The END of the THIRD ACT.

A C T IV. S C E N E I.

OEDIPUS, JOCASTA.

OEDIPUS.

JOCASTA, 'tis in vain : say what thou wilt,
These terrible suspicions haunt me still ;
The priest affrights me ; I acquit him now,
And ev'n, in secret, am my own accuser.
O ! I have ask'd myself some dreadful questions ;
A thousand strange events, which from my mind
Were long effac'd, now rush in crouds upon me,
And harrow up my soul ; the past obstructs,
The present but confounds me, and the future
Is big with horrid truths ; on ev'ry side
Guilt waits my footsteps.

JOCASTA.

Will not virtue guard thee ?
Art thou not sure that thou art innocent ?

OEDIPUS.

W're oft more guilty than we think we are.

JOCASTA.

Disdain the madness of a talking priest,
Nor thus excuse him with unmanly fears.

OEDIPUS.

OEDIPUS.

Now in the name of the unhappy king,
And angry heav'n, let me intreat thee, say,
When Laius undertook that fatal journey,
Did guards attend him ?

JOCASTA.

I've already told thee,
One follow'd him alone.

OEDIPUS.

And only one ?

JOCASTA.

Superior even to the rank he bore,
He was a king, who, like thyself, disdain'd
All irksome pomp, and never wou'd permit
An idle train of slaves to march before him.
Amidst his happy subjects fearless still,
And still unguarded liv'd in peace and safety,
And thought his people's love his best defence

OEDIPUS.

Thou best of kings, sent by indulgent heav'n
To mortals here ; thou exemplary greatness !
Cou'd ever Oedipus his barb'rous hand

Lift against thee? but if thou can'st, Jocasta,
Describe him to me.

JOCASTA.

Since thou wilt recall
The sad remembrance, hear what Laius was :
Spite of the frost which hoary age had spread
O'er his fair temples in declining age,
Which yet was vig'rous, his eyes sparkled still
With all the fire of youth, his wrinkled forehead
Beneath, his silver locks attracted awe
And rev'rence from mankind : if I may dare
To say it, Laius much resembled thee ;
With pleasure I behold in Oedipus
His virtues and his features thus united.
What have I said t'alarm thee thus ?——

OEDIPUS.

I see
Some strange misfortune will o'ertake me soon ;
The priest, I fear, was by the gods inspir'd,
And but too truly hath foretold my fate :
Cou'd I do this, and was it possible ?

JOCASTA.

Are then these holy instruments of heav'n
Infallible ? Their ministry indeed

Binds

Binds them to th'altar, they approach the gods,
But they are mortals still ; and think'st thou then
Truth is dependent on the flight of birds ?
Think'st thou, expiring by the sacred knife,
The groaning heifer shall for them alone
Remove the veil of dark futurity ?
Or the gay victims, crown'd with flow'ry garlands,
Within their entrails bear the fates of men ?
O no ! to search for truth by ways like these
Is to usurp the rights of pow'r supreme ;
These priests are not what the vile rabble think them,
Their knowledge springs from our credulity.

OEDIPUS.

Wou'd it were so ! for then I might be happy.

JOCASTA.

It is : alas ! my griefs bear witness to it.
Once I was partial to them like thyself,
But undeceiv'd at length lament my folly ;
Heav'n hath chastis'd me for my easy faith
In dark mysterious lying oracles,
That robb'd me of my child ; I hate the base
Deluders all ; had it not been for them,
My son had still been living.

OEDIPUS.

Ha ! thy son !

How did'st thou lose him ? By what oracles
Did the gods speak concerning him ?

JOCASTA.

I'll tell thee

What from myself I wou'd have gladly hidden.
But t'was a false one ; therefore be not mov'd.
Thou must have heard I had a son by Laius,
A mother's fond disquietude provok'd me
To ask his fate of the great oracle.
Alas ! what madness 'tis to wrest from heav'n
Those secrets which it kindly wou'd conceal :
But I was a weak woman, and a mother.
Before the priestess' feet I fell submissive,
And thus her answer was ; for O ! too well
I must remember what but to repeat
Now makes me tremble, but thou wilt forgive me :
' Thy son shall slay his father, sacrilegious,
' Incestuous, parricide.' Shall I go on ?

OEDIPUS.

Well, very well——

JOCASTA.

In short, it then foretold me,
This son, this monster shou'd pollute my bed ;

That

That I, his mother, shou'd embrace my son,
Just recent from the murder of his father.
That thus united by these dreadful ties,
I shou'd bear children to this hapless child.
You seem to be disorder'd at my story,
And dread perhaps to hear the sad remainder.

OEDIPUS.

Proceed: what did you with the wretched infant,
Object of wrath divine?

JOCASTA.

Believ'd the gods;
Piously cruel, sacrific'd my child,
And stifled all a mother's tenderness:
In vain the clamours of parental love
Condemn'd the rigid laws of partial heav'n:
Alas! I meant to save the tender victim
From his hard fate that threatned future guilt,
And doom'd him to involuntary crimes:
I thought to triumph o'er the oracle,
And in compassion gave him up to death.
Cruel compassion, and destructive too!
Deceitful darkness of a false prediction!
What did I reap from my inhuman care,
Did it prolong my wretched husband's life?

Alas ! cut off in full prosperity,
He fell by th'unknown hands of base assassins,
Not by his son, thus were they both torn from me :
I lost my child, and cou'd not save his father.
By my example taught, avoid my errors,
Banish these idle fears, and calm thy soul.

OEDIPUS.

After the dreadful secret thou hast told me,
It were not fit I shou'd conceal my own :
Hear then my tale ; perchance when thou shalt know
The sad relation, which they bear each other,
Thou too wilt tremble : Born the nat'ral heir
To Corinth's throne, from Corinth far remov'd,
I look with horror on my native land :
One day, that fatal day I well remember,
For O ! 'tis ever present to my thoughts,
And dreadful to my soul, my youthful hands
For the first time their solemn gift prepar'd
An off'ring to the gods, when lo ! the gates
Throughout the temple on a sudden stood
Self-open'd, and the pillars stream'd with blood ;
The altars shook ; a hand invisible
Threw back my off'rings, and in thunder thus
A horrid voice address'd me : ' Come not here,
' Stain not the holy threshold with thy feet,

' The

‘ The gods have from the living cut thee off
‘ Indignant, nor will e’er accept thy gifts ;
‘ Go, take thy off’rings to the furies, seek
‘ The serpents that stand ready to devour thee ;
‘ These are thy gods, begone, and worship them.’

Whilst terror seiz’d me at these dreadful words,
Again the voice alarm’d me, and foretold
All those sad crimes which heav’n to thee denounc’d
Against thy son ; said, I shou’d slay my father,
O gods ! and be the husband of my mother.

JOCASTA.

Where am I ? what malicious dæmon join’d
Our hands, to make us thus supremely wretched ?

OEDIPUS.

Reserve thy tears for something still more dreadful ;
Now list and tremble : fearful of myself,
Lest I shou’d e’er fulfil the dire prediction,
Or oppose heav’n, I left my native land,
Broke from the arms of a distracted mother,
Wander’d from place to place, disguis’d my birth,
My family, and name, by one kind friend
Attended ; yet, in my disastrous journey,
The God who guided my sad footsteps oft
Strengthen’d my arm, and crown’d me with success :
But happier had it been for Oedipus,

If he had fall'n with glory in the field,
And by his death prevented all his woes :
I was reserv'd to be a parricide :
The hand of heav'n, so long suspended o'er me,
Hath from my eyes at length remov'd the veil
Of Ignorance, and now I see it all :
I do remember, in the fields of Phocis
(Nor know I how I cou'd so long forget
The great event) that in a narrow way
I met two warriors in a splendid car :
The path was strait, and we disputed it :
An idle contest for us both ; but I
Was young and haughty, from my earliest years
Bred up to pride that flow'd in with my blood ;
An unknown stranger in a foreign land,
I thought myself upon my father's throne,
And whomsoe'er I chanc'd to meet esteem'd
As my own vassals, born but to obey me :
I rush'd upon them, and with furious arm
Their rapid coursers stopp'd in full career ;
Hurl'd from their chariot the intrepid pair,
Forward advanc'd in rage, and both attack'd me :
The combat was not long, for vict'ry soon
Declar'd for Oedipus. Immortal pow'r's !
Whether from hatred or from love I know not,

But surely on that day ye fought for me :
I saw them both expiring at my feet,
And one of them, I do remember well,
Who seem'd in age well-stricken, as he lay
Gasping on th'earth, look'd earnestly upon me,
Held out his arms, and wou'd have spoke : I saw
The tears flow plenteous from his half-clos'd eyes :
Methought when I did wound him my shock'd soul,
All conqu'ror as I was——you shake, Jocasta.

JOCASTA.

My lord, see Phorbias comes ; this way they lead him.

OEDIPUS.

Tis well : my doubts will then be satisfy'd.

SCENE II.

OEDIPUS, JOCASTA, PHORBAS, ATTENDANTS.

OEDIPUS.

Come hither, thou unfortunate old man ;
The sight of him alarms my conscious soul ;
Confus'd remembrance tortures me ; I dread
To look on, or to question him.

PHORBAS.

O queen,
Is this the day appointed for my death ;

Hast

Hast thou decreed it? Never but to me
Wert thou unjust.

JOCASTA.

Fear not, but hear the king,
And answer him.

PHORBAS.

The king?

JOCASTA.

Thou stand'st before him.

PHORBAS.

Ye gods! is this the successor of Laius?

OEDIPUS.

Waste not the time thus idly, but inform me,
Thou wert the only witness of his death,
And wounded, so 'tis said, in his defence.

PHORBAS.

He's dead, and let his ashes rest in peace;
Embitter not my fate, nor thus insult
A faithful subject wounded by thy hand.

OEDIPUS.

I wound thee? I?

PHORBAS.

Now satiate thy revenge,
And put an end to this unhappy life;

The

The poor remains of blood which then escap'd thee
Now thou may'st shed; and since thou must remember
The fatal place where Laius——

OEDIPUS.

Spare the rest:

It is enough: I see it now: t'was I:

Ye gods! my eyes are open'd.

JOCASTA.

Can it be?

OEDIPUS.

And art thou he whom my unhappy rage

Attack'd at Daulis in the narrow path?

O yes it is; must be so: in vain myself

Wou'd I deceive, all speaks too plain against me,

I know thee but too well.

PHORBAS.

I saw him fall,

My royal master fall beneath thy hand:

Thou did'st the crime, and I have suffer'd for it:

A prison was my fate, and thine a throne.

OEDIPUS.

Away: I soon shall do thee ample justice,

Thee and myself; leave then to me the care

Of my own punishment: begone, and save me

At

At least the painful fight of innocence,
Which I have made unhappy.

S C E N E III.

OEDIPUS, JOCASTA.

OEDIPUS.

O Jocasta !

For cruel fate forbids me ever more
To call thee by the tender name of wife ;
Thou see'st my crimes ; no longer bound to love ;
Strike now, and free thyself from the dread thought
Of being mine.

JOCASTA.

Alas !

OEDIPUS.

Take, take this sword,
The instrument of my unhappy rage ;
Receive, and use it for a noble purpose,
And plunge it in my breast.

JOCASTA.

What would'st thou do ?
O stop thy furious grief, be calm, and live.

OEDIPUS.

Canst thou have pity on a wretch like me ?
No, I must dye.

JOCASTA.

JOCASTA.

Thou must not : hear Jocasta,
O hear her pray'rs !

OEDIPUS.

I will not, must not hear thee.
I slew thy husband.

JOCASTA.

And thou gav'st me one.

OEDIPUS.

I did, but t'was by guilt.

JOCASTA.

Involuntary.

OEDIPUS.

No matter, still t'was guilt.

JOCASTA.

O heighth of woe !

OEDIPUS.

O fatal nuptials ! once such envied bliss !

JOCASTA.

Such be it still, for still thou art my husband.

OEDIPUS.

O no ! I am not ; this destructive hand
Hath broke the sacred tye, and deep involv'd

Thy

Thy kingdom in my ruin. O! avoid me,
Fear the vindictive God who still pursues
The wretched Oedipus; I fear myself,
My timid virtue serves but to confound me;
Perhaps my fate may reach ev'n thee, Jocasta;
Pity thyself, pity the hapless victims
That perish daily for my guilt; O strike,
And save thy Oedipus from future crimes.

JOCASTA.

Do not accuse, do not condemn thyself;
Thou art unhappy, but thou art not guilty:
Thou did'st not know whose blood thy hand had shed
In Daulis' fatal conflict; when remembrance
Calls forth the melancholy deed, I must
Weep for myself, but shou'd not punish thee.
Live therefore——.

OEDIPUS.

No; it is impossible:
Farewell, Jocasta! whither must I go,
O whither must I drag this hateful being?
What clime accurs'd, or what disastrous shore
Shall hide my crimes, and bury my despair?
Still must I wander on from clime to clime,
Or rise by murder to another throne?

Shall I to Corinth bend my way, where fate
Hath heavier crimes in store for Oedipus?
O Corinth! ne'er on thy detested borders——

S C E N E IV.

OEDIPUS, JOCASTA, DIMAS.

DIMAS.

My lord, this moment is arriv'd a stranger,
He says, from Corinth, and desires admittance.

OEDIPUS.

I'll go and meet him——fare thee well, Jocasta:
But stop thy tears; no more shalt thou behold
The wretched Oedipus; it is determined:
My reign is past; thou hast no husband now,
I am no more a sov'reign, nor Jocasta's.
Oppress'd with ills I go, in search of climes,
Where far remov'd from thee and from my country,
I still may act as shall become a king,
Worthy of thee, and justify the tears
Thou shed'st for Oedipus: farewell! for ever.

The END of the FOURTH ACT.

A C T V. S C E N E I.

OEDIPUS, ARASPES, DIMAS, ATTENDANTS.

OEDIPUS.

WEEP not for me, my friends, nor thus regret
Your sov'reign's fate : I wish for banishment ;
To me 'tis pleasure ; for I know t'will make
My people happy : you must lose your king,
But shall preserve his country. When I first
Came to the throne of Thebes, I serv'd it well ;
And, as I mounted, now I shall descend
In glory : honour shall attend my fall :
I leave my country, kingdom, children, all :
Then hear me now, hear my last parting words ;
A king you must have ; let him be my choice ;
Take Philoctetes : he is gen'rous, noble,
Virtuous, and brave ; his father was a king,
And he the friend of Hercules ; let him
Succeed me : I must hence.—Go, search out Phorbas ;
Bid him not fear, but come this moment hither,
I must bequeath him something ; he deserves it :
I'll take my farewell as a monarch ought.
Go, bring the stranger to me—stay thou here.

S C E N E

S C E N E II.

OEDIPUS, ARASPES, ICARUS, ATTENDANTS.

OEDIPUS.

Ha ! is it thou, my much-lov'd Icarus !
The faithful guardian of my infant years,
Fav'rite and friend of Polybus, my father,
What brought thee hither ?

ICARUS.

Polybus is dead.

OEDIPUS.

Alas ? my father !

ICARUS.

T'was what we expected ;
For he had fill'd the measure of his days,
And dy'd in good old age ; these eyes beheld it.

OEDIPUS.

Where are ye now, mistaken oracles !
That shook my timid virtue, and foretold
That I shou'd prove a guilty parricide ?
My father's dead, ye meant but to deceive me ;
These hands are not polluted with his blood :
The slave of error, I have wander'd long
In darkness, busy'd in a fruitless toil,

And

And to remove imaginary ills,
Have made my life a scene of real woes,
The offspring of my fond credulity.

How dear must be the colour of my fate
When miseries like this can bring relief!
Bliss spring from sorrow, and a father's death
Shall be accepted as the gift of heav'n!
But I must hence, and to his ashes pay
The tribute due:—ha! silent, and in tears!

ICARUS.

Ought I to speak? O heav'n!

OEDIPUS.

Ha! thou aught more.

Of ill to tell me?

ICARUS.

For a moment grant me

Your private ear.

OEDIPUS.

Retire.—What can this mean?

[To the attendants.]

ICARUS.

Think not of Corinth: thither, if thou go'st,
Thy death is certain.

OEDIPUS.

Who shall banish me

From my own kingdom?

ICARUS.

ICARUS.

To the throne of Corinth

Another heir succeeds.

OEDIPUS.

Ye gods! is this

The last sad stroke which I am born to suffer,

Or will ye still pursue me? Fate, go on

And persecute, thou shalt not conquer me:

Let us away to my rebellious subjects,

I'll go to be their scourge, if not their king,

And find at least an honourable death.

But say, what stranger has usurp'd my throne?

ICARUS.

He is the son-in-law of Polybus,

Who on his head did place the diadem

In his last moments; the obedient people

Hail their new sov'reign.

OEDIPUS.

Has my father too

Betray'd me, sided with my faithless subjects,

And drove me from my throne?

ICARUS.

He did but justice,

For thou wert not his son.

OEDIPUS.

OEDIPUS.

Ha ! Icarus !

ICARUS.

With terror and regret I must reveal
The dreadful secret, Corinth——

OEDIPUS.

Not his son !

ICARUS.

'Thou art not. Polybus, oppress'd by conscience,
Dying declar'd it ; to the royal blood
Of Corinth's kings he yielded up his throne :
I who alone enjoy'd his confidence,
And therefore dreaded the new sov'reign's pow'r,
Fled to implore thy aid.

OEDIPUS.

Who am I then,

If not the son of Polybus ?

ICARUS.

The gods,

Who trusted to my hands thy infant years,
In shades of darkest night conceal thy birth ;
I only know, that soon as born condemn'd
To death, and on a desert hill expos'd ;
Thou but for me had'st perish'd.

OEDIPUS.

OEDIPUS.

Thus with life

Began my sorrows, a detested object
 Ee'n from my cradle, and accurs'd by all.
 Where did'st thou light on me?

ICARUS.

On mount Citheron,

OEDIPUS.

Near Thebes?

ICARUS.

In that deserted place, a Theban;
 Who call'd himself thy father, left thee; there
 To perish: some kind God conducted me
 That way; I pity'd, took thee in my arms,
 Reviv'd, and cherish'd thee: to Corinth then
 Carry'd my little charge, and to the king
 Presented thee; who, mark thy wondrous fate!
 His child just dead, adopted thee his son,
 And by that stroke of policy confirm'd
 His tott'ring power: As son of Polybus
 Thou wert brought up by him who had preserv'd
 thee:

The throne of Corinth never was thy right,
 But conscience robb'd thee of what chance bestow'd.

OEDIPUS.

Immortal pow'rs, who rule the fate of kings!

Am

Am I thus doom'd in one unhappy day
To suffer such variety of woe !

On a frail mortal shall your miracles
Be thus exhausted ! But inform me, friend,
This old man, from whose hands you took me, say,
Hast thou beheld him since that fatal hour ?

I C A R U S.

Never : perhaps he's dead, he who alone
Cou'd tell thee the strange secret of thy birth ;
But on my mind his image is engrav'd
So deeply, I shou'd know him well.

O E D I P U S.

Alas !

Wretch that I am ! why shou'd I wish, to find him ?
Rather, submissive to the will of heav'n
Shou'd I keep close the veil that o'er my eyes
Spreads its benignant shade : too well already
I see my fate ; more knowledge wou'd but shew
New horrors ; and yet, spite of all my woes,
Urg'd on by fatal curiosity,
I thirst for more : I cannot bear to rest
In sad suspense : to doubt is to be wretched :
I dread the torch that lights me to my ruin :
I fear to know myself, yet cannot long
Remain unknown.

SCENE

SCENE III.

OEDIPUS, ICARUS, PHORBAS.

OEDIPUS.

Ha! Phorbas! come this way.

ICARUS.

Surprising! sure the more I look, the more——

'Tis he, my lord, it must be he.

PHORBAS.

Forgive me [*To Icarus.*]

If still that face unknown——

ICARUS.

Dost thou remember?

On mount Citheron——

PHORBAS.

How!

ICARUS.

The child you gave me,

The child to death——

PHORBAS.

What dost thou say? remember,

Remember what?

ICARUS.

Thou hast no cause to fear;

Be not alarm'd : thou may'st rejoice, that infant
Was——Oedipus.

PHORBAS.

The light'ning blast thee, wretch !
What hast thou said?

ICARUS.

Doubt not, my lord, whate'er
[*To Oedipus.*

This Theban says, he gave thee to my arms;
Thy fate is known ; this old man is thy father.

OEDIPUS.

What complicated misery ! Alas ! [*To Phorbas.*
If thou'rt indeed my father, will the gods
E'er suffer me to shed thy blood ?

PHORBAS.

O no !

For thou art not my son.

OEDIPUS.

And didst not thou
Expose me in my infancy ?

PHORBAS.

My lord,

Permit me to retire, and hide from thee
The dreadful truth.

OEDIPUS.

OEDIPUS.

No, Phorbas ; by the gods
I beg thee, tell me all.

PHORBAS.

Begone, avoid
Thy children, and thy queen.

OEDIPUS.

Now answer me,
For to resist is vain : that infant, doom'd
To death by thee, say, didst thou give it him.

[Pointing to Icarus.]

PHORBAS.

I did : and wou'd that day had been my last !

OEDIPUS.

And of what country was that child !

PHORBAS.

Of Thebes.

OEDIPUS.

And thou art not his father ?

PHORBAS.

No : alas !

Sprung from a nobler, but more wretched race——

OEDIPUS.

Who was he then?

PHORBAS.

My lord, what wou'd you do?

[throwing himself at the feet of Oedipus.]

OEDIPUS.

Speak, speak, I say.

PHORBAS.

Jocasta was his mother.

ICARUS.

[Looking at Oedipus.]

Behold the fruit of all my gen'rous care!

PHORBAS.

What have we done?

OEDIPUS.

I thought it must be so.

ICARUS.

My Lord——

OEDIPUS.

Away, begone, this moment leave me :
The dreadful gifts ye have bestow'd on me
Must have their recompense ; and ye have cause
To fear my wrath, for ye preserv'd my life.

SCENE

S C E N E IV.

OEDIPUS.

At length the dire prediction is fulfill'd,
And Oedipus is now, tho' innocent,
A base incestuous parricide: O virtue!
Thou fatal empty name; thou who didst guide
My hapless days, thou hadst not pow'r to stop
The current of my fate: alas! I fell
Into the snare by trying to avoid it:
Heav'n led me on to guilt, and sunk a pit
Beneath my sliding feet: I was the slave
Of some unknown, some unrelenting pow'r,
That us'd me for its instrument of vengeance:
These are my crimes, remorseless cruel gods!
Yours was the guilt, and ye have punish'd me.
Where am I? what dark shade thus from my eyes
Covers the light of heav'n? the walls are stain'd
With blood; the furies shake their torches at me;
The light'nings flash; hell opens her wide gates:
O Laius! O my father! art thou there?
I see the deadly wound these hands had made;
Revenge thee now on this abhorred monster,
A monster who defil'd the bed of her
Who bore him: lead me to the dark abode,

102

That I may strike fresh terror to the hearts
Of guilty beings by my punishment :
Wh Lead on, I'll follow thee.

S C E N E V.

OEDIPUS, JOCASTA, EGINA, CHORUS.

JOCASTA.

Spe

O Oedipus,

Dispel my fears, thy dreadful cries alarm me.

OEDIPUS.

Open, thou earth, and swallow me !

JOCASTA.

Bel

Alas !

What sad misfortune moves thee thus ?

W

OEDIPUS.

My crimes.

JOCASTA.

My lord ! ———

OEDIPUS.

M

Away, Jocasta.

JOCASTA.

Cruel husband !

OEDIPUS.

O stop ! what name is that ? am I thy husband ?

Do not say husband : we shall hate each other.

JOCASTA.

JOCASTA.

What say'st thou?

OEDIPUS.

'Tis enough : I have fulfill'd
My horrid fate : know, Laius was my father ;
I am thy son.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

O guilt !

SECOND PERSON OF THE CHORUS.

O dreadful day !

JOCASTA.

Egina, drag me from this horrid place !

EGINA.

Alas !

JOCASTA.

If thou hast pity on Jocasta,
If without horror thou can'st now approach me,
Assist me now, compassionate thy queen !

LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

Ye gods ! and is it thus your vengeance ceases ?
Take back your cruel gifts, t'were better far
That we had suffer'd still.

S C E N E

102

S C E N E VI.

Wh

JOCASTA, EGINA, HIGH-PRIEST, CHORUS.

HIGH-PRIEST.

Attend, ye people,

And know, a milder sun now beams upon you :

At length the baleful pestilence is fled,

Spe

The graves once more are clos'd, and death hath left
us ;The God of heav'n and earth declares his goodness
In peals of thunder : hark !*[Thunder and lightning.]*

Be

JOCASTA.

What dreadful flashes !

Where am I ? heav'n ! what do I hear ! Barbarians—

W

HIGH-PRIEST.

'Tis done : the gods are satisfy'd : no more

Doth Laius from the tomb cry out for vengeance :

Jocasta, thou may'st live and reign ; the blood

N

Of Oedipus sufficeth.

CHORUS.

Gracious heav'n !

JOCASTA.

My son ! and must I call him husband too !

Dear dreadful names ! is he then dead ?

HIGH

HIGH PRIEST.

He lives,

But from the living and the dead cut off,
Depriv'd of light : I saw him plunge this sword,
Stain'd with his father's blood, into his eyes :
This fatal moment has to Thebes restor'd
Her safety : such are the decrees of heav'n ;
Which, as it wills, decides the fate of mortals,
All-pow'rful or to save or to destroy.
Its wrath is all exhausted on thy son,
And thou art pardon'd.

JOCASTA.

Punish then thyself.

[Stabs herself.]

Jocasta, thus reserv'd for horrid incest,
Death is the only good remaining for me :
Laius, receive my blood : I follow thee :
I have liv'd virtuous, and shall dye with pleasure.

CHORUS.

Unhappy queen, and sad calamity !

JOCASTA.

Weep only for my son, who still survives.
Priests, and you Thebans, who were once my subjects,
Honour

102

WE

Honour my ashes, and remember ever,
That midst the horrors which oppress'd me, still
I cou'd reproach the gods ; for heav'n alone
Was guilty of the crime, and not Jocasta.

Spe

END of the FIFTH and last ACT.

B





M A R I A M N E.

A

T R A G E D Y.



192

Wh

Spe

B

V

P R E F A C E.

I HAVE printed this piece not without fear and trembling ; the number of performances which have met with applause on the stage, and contempt in the closet, give me but too much reason to apprehend the same fate with regard to my own. Two or three agreeable incidents, together with the art and management of the actors, might conciliate an audience in the representation ; but a very different degree of merit is necessary to make it shine in the full glare of publication. Little will avail the regular conduct of it, and even, perhaps, as little the interesting nature of the subject. Every work that is written in verse, though it may be unexceptionable in all other respects, must of necessity disgust if every line is not full of strength and harmony ; if there is not an elegance running through the whole ; if the piece has not, in short, that inexpressible charm, which nothing but true genius can bestow upon it ; that point of perfection which knowledge alone can never attain to, and concerning which we have argued so poorly, and to so little purpose, since the death of Mons. Despréaux.

102

W

Sp

B

V

It is a great mistake to imagine, that the verification of a dramatic performance is either the easiest or the least considerable part of it. Racine, who, of all men upon earth, after Virgil, best knew the art of verse, did not think it so : he employ'd two whole years in writing his Phædra. Pradon boasts of having compos'd his in less than three months. As the transient success of a tragedy depends, with regard to the representation, not on the stile, but on the incidents and the actors, the two Phædras seem'd at first to meet with an equal degree of applause ; but the publication soon determin'd the real and intrinsic merit of each of them. Pradon, according to the usual practice of bad authors, came out with an insolent preface ; accusing all those who had attack'd his piece as unfair and partial criticks ; a trouble which he might as well have spared himself ; for his tragedy, puff'd off as it was by himself and his party, soon sunk into that contempt which it deserves ; and if it were not for the Phædra of Racine, the world wou'd not know at this day that Pradon had ever wrote one.

But whence then arises the vast difference between these two performances ? the plot is nearly the same in both. Phædra dies, Theseus is absent in the two first acts :

acts: he is suppos'd to be in the shades below with Pirithous. Hippolytus, his son, wants to leave Trezene, and to fly from Aricia, whom he is in love with: he declares his passion to Aricia, and listens to Phædra's with horror: he dies the same kind of death, and his governor relates the manner of it.

Add to this likewise, that the principal personages in both pieces, as they are in the same circumstances, say almost the same things: but this is the very place which distinguishes the great man from the bad poet; when Racine and Pradon have the same sentiments, they differ most from each other: for a proof of this, let us take the declaration of Hippolytus to Aricia. Racine makes him talk thus:

I who so long defy'd the tyrant's pow'r,
Smil'd at his chains, and made a mock of love:
Myself on shore, I saw weak mortals wreck'd,
And thought I safely might behold the storm
At distance rage, which I cou'd never feel:
And must I sink beneath the common lot?
I must: this haughty soul at length is conquer'd,
And hangs on thee: for six long months despair
And shame have rent my soul: where'er I go,

The

102

W

Sp

B

V

The wound still rankles : with myself long time
 In vain I struggled, reason'd, wept in vain :
 When absent seek thee, and when present shun :
 Thy image haunts me in the sylvan shade :
 The day-light's splendor and the evening's gloom
 All bring the lov'd Aricia to my eyes :
 All, all, unite to make this rebel thine.
 O ! I have lost myself : the bow unbent,
 And useless arrows lay neglected by me ;
 Thy lessons, Neptune, are no more remember'd :
 The woods re-eccho to my sighs alone
 Responsive, and my idle coursers now
 Forget the voice of their Hippolytus.

Now observe how this Hippolytus expresses himself in
 Pradon.

Long time, too long, alas ! with lips profane,
 Laughing at love, did I adore Diana ;
 A solitary savage long I liv'd,
 And chafed the bears and lions in the forest ;
 But now more pressing cares employ my time,
 For since I saw thee I have left off hunting,
 Tho' once I took delight in it, but now
 I never go there but to think of you.

It

It is impossible to read and compare these two pieces without admiring one and laughing at the other; and yet there is the same ground of thoughts and sentiments in both: when we are to make the passions speak, all men have pretty nearly the same ideas; but the manner of expressing them, distinguishes the man of wit from him that has none; the man of genius from him who has nothing but wit; and the real poet from him who wou'd be a poet if he could.

To arrive at Racine's perfection in writing, a man must possess his genius, and withal must polish and correct his works as he did: how dissident then ought I to be, born as I am with such indifferent talents, and oppress'd by continual disorders, who have neither the gift of a fine imagination, nor time to correct laboriously the faults of my performances! I am sensible of and lament the imperfections of this piece, as well with regard to the conduct as the diction of it: I shou'd have mended them a little, if I cou'd have put off this edition for a little longer; but still I shou'd have left a great many behind. In every art there is a certain point beyond which we can never advance: we are shut up within the limits of our talents; we see perfection lying beyond us; and only make impotent endeavours to attain to it.

102

W

Sp

B

I shall not make a formal and regular critique on this piece, the reader will probably save me that trouble; but it may be necessary to say something concerning a general objection to the choice of my subject. As it is the nature of Frenchmen to lay hold with rapidity on the ridicule of things, in themselves the most serious, it has been said, that the subject of Mariamne is nothing but an old amorous brutal husband; whose wife, being out of humour with him, refuses him the return of conjugal duty: to which it has been added, that a family quarrel cou'd never make a good tragedy. I wou'd only beg these criticks to join with me in a few reflections on this strange kind of prejudice.

The plots of tragedies are generally founded, either on the interests of a whole nation, or the private interests of the sovereign. Of the first kind are the Iphigenia in Aulis; where all Greece, met in full assembly, demands the blood of the son of Agamemnon; the Horatii, where the three combattants are to decide the fate of Rome; and the Oedipus, where the safety and prosperity of Thebes depends on the discovery of the murtherer of Laius. Of the latter kind are Britannicus, Phædra, Mithridates, &c. In these all the interest

interest is confin'd to the hero of the piece and his family : all turns upon such passions as the vulgar feel equally with princes, the plot of them may be as proper for comedy as for tragedy : for, take away the names only, and *Mithridates* is no more than an old fellow in love with a young girl : his two sons are in love with her at the same time : and he makes use of a very low artifice to discover which of his sons the lady is fond of. *Phædra* is a step-mother, who, egg'd on by her confidante, makes love to her son-in-law, who is unfortunately pre-engag'd. *Nero* is an impetuous young man, who falls precipitately in love, and immediately wants to be separated from his wife, and hides himself behind the tapestry to overhear the conversation of his mistress. These are all of them subjects which *Moliere* might treat as well as *Racine* : nay, the whole plot of the *Miser* is exactly the same as that of *Mithridates* : *Harpagon* and the king of *Pontus* are two old fellows in love : each of them has a son for his rival ; both of them make use of the same artifice to discover the intrigue carry'd on between the son and the mistress ; and both pieces end in the marriage of the young man.

Moliere

102

W

Sp

B

Moliere and *Racine* met with equal success: one made the world laugh, amus'd, and entertain'd them; the other mov'd, terrify'd and made us weep. *Moliere* expos'd the folly of an old miser in love; *Racine* painted the weakness of a great man, and so contriv'd, as at the same time even to make that weakness respectable.

Were we to order *Vateau* and *le Brun*, each of them, to paint us a wedding; one wou'd give us the representation of a groupe of peasants in an arbour, full of vulgar joy and jollity, plac'd round a rustic table, where drunkenness, riot, debauchery, and immoderate laughter reign'd without controul: the other wou'd paint the marriage of *Peleus* and *Thetis*, the feast of the gods, with all their solemn and majestic celebration of it. Thus both of them wou'd reach the highest degree of perfection in their art, by means intirely different.

We may fairly apply every one of these examples to *Mariamne*. The bad temper of a woman; the love of an old husband; the malicious tricks of a sister-in-law; are subjects in themselves inconsiderable, and seem

seem rather adapted to comedy : but at the same time a king, whom all the world have honour'd with the name of *Great*, passionately enamour'd with the finest woman in the universe ; the rage and fury of a monarch so famous for his virtues and his crimes, his past cruelty, and his present remorse ; that perpetual and rapid transition from love to hatred, and from hatred to love ; the ambition of his sister ; the intrigues of his ministers ; the distressful situation of a princess whose virtue and beauty have been so often celebrated and talk'd of to this day, who had seen her father and brother doom'd to death by her husband ; and to complete her misfortunes, saw herself belov'd by the murderer of her family. What a field is here ! what an opening for any genius but mine ! can we say this is a subject unfit for tragedy ? Here we may indeed averr, that, *according as things turn out, they change their names.*

DRAMATIS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

VARUS, a Roman Prætor, Governor of Syria.

HEROD, King of Palæstine.

MARIAMNE, Wife of Herod.

SALOME, Sister of Herod.

ALBINUS, Friend to Varus.

MAZAEL, } Herod's Ministers.
IDAMAS, }

NABAL, an old Officer under the Asmonæan Kings.

ELIZA, Confidante of Mariamne.

Herod's Guard, Attendants on Varus, Herod, and
Mariamne.

SCENE JERUSALEM.

MARIAMNE.

M A R I A M N E.

A

T R A G E D Y.

A C T I. S C E N E I.

SALOME, MAZAEI,

MAZAEI.

IT is enough: the pow'r of Salome,
 By all acknowledg'd, and by all obey'd,
 On its firm basis stands immoveable:
 I fled to Azor, with the light'ning's speed,
 Ev'n from Samaria's plain to Jordan's spring,
 And quick return'd: my presence there indeed
 Was needful, to cut off th'aspiring hopes
 Of Israel's moody race: thy brother Herod,
 So long detain'd at Rome, was almost grown
 A stranger in his kingdom; and the people,

Ever

Ever capricious, turbulent, and bold,
Still to their kings unjust, aloud proclaim'd,
That Herod was condemn'd to slavery
By haughty Rome ; and Mariamne, rais'd
To the high rank of her proud ancestors,
Wou'd from the blood of our high-priests select
A king, to rule o'er conquer'd Palæstine.
With grief I see, she is by all ador'd ;
Her name the dear delight of ev'ry tongue ;
Israel reveres the race from whence she sprang,
Ev'n to idolatry : her birth, her beauty,
And, above all, her sorrows, melt the hearts
Of the rude rabble, who, thou know'st, detest
And rail at us. They call her their dear sov'reign,
And seem to threaten thee with swift destruction.
I saw the fickle multitudes alarm'd
With idle tales like these, but soon I taught e'm
Another lesson ; soon I made e'm tremble :
Told e'm great Herod, fraught with double pow'r,
And arm'd with vengeance, wou'd e'er long return :
His name alone struck terror to their souls,
They saw their folly then, and wept in silence.

SALOME.

Thou told'st them truth, for Herod comes, and soon
Shall make rebellious Sion bend beneath him.

Antony

Antony's favorite is Cæsar's friend ;
Fortune attends him, at his chariot wheels
Submissive chain'd : his subtle policy
Is equal to his courage, and he rises
With added strength and glory from his fall :
The senate crown him.

MAZÆL.

But when Mariamne
Shall see her husband, where will be thy pow'r ?
That haughty rival o'er the king had ever
A fatal influence that supplanted thee ;
And her proud spirit, still inflexible,
And still revengeful, holds its enmity :
Her safety must depend on thy destruction,
And mutual inj'ries nourish mutual hate.
Dost thou not dread her all-subduing charms,
Those lordly tyrants o'er the vanquish'd Herod ?
For five years past, e'er since their fatal marriage,
Hath his strange passion for her still increas'd,
By hatred fix'd, and nourish'd by disdain.
Oft have we seen the haughty monarch kneel
Before her feet, her eyes indignant turn'd
In fury from him, whilst in vain he su'd
For softer looks than she wou'd deign to give.
How have we seen him rage, and sigh, and weep,

W

Sp

B

Abuse, and flatter, threaten and implore !
 Mean in his rage, and cruel in his love ;
 Abroad a hero, and a slave at home :
 He punish'd an ungrateful barb'ous race,
 And, reeking with the father's blood, ador'd
 The daughter ; rais'd the dagger to her breast,
 Guided by thee, then dropp'd it at her feet.
 At Rome indeed, whilst from her sight remov'd,
 The chain was loosen'd ; but t'will re-unite
 When he returns, and shall again behold
 The fatal charms which he so long admir'd :
 Those pow'rful eyes are ever sure to please,
 And will resume their empire o'er his heart :
 Her foes will soon be humbled, and if she
 But gives the nod, must fall a sacrifice
 To her resentment. Let us guard against it,
 And court that pow'r which we can ne'er destroy :
 Respect well-feign'd may win her to our purpose.

SALOME.

No : there are better methods to remove
 Our fears of Mariamne.

MAZAEI.

Ha ! what means ?

SALOME.

Perhaps e'vn now she dies.

MAZAEI.

MAZAEI.

And wilt thou dare
To do a deed so desp'rate? If the king—

S A L O M E.

The king affifts me in the work of vengeance,
And has consented : Zares is arriv'd
At Solyma ; my instrument of wrath
Waits for his victim : know, the time, the place,
The hand to execute, are ready all :
To-day it must be done.

MAZAEI.

Hast thou then gain'd
At last the vict'ry ? Cou'd the king believe thee ?
Spite of his passion, will he yield up all,
And act as thou command'ft ?

S A L O M E.

Not so : my pow'r
Is more confin'd : scarce cou'd I urge to vengeance,
With all my arts, his long-reluctant soul,
But I avail'd me of his absence from her :
Whilst Herod liv'd, expos'd to all her charms,
Thou know'ft I led a life of wretchedness,
Of doubt and fear, uncertain of my fate ;
When, by a thousand crooked paths, at last

W I found a passage to his heart, and thought
I had secur'd it, Mariamne came ;
And, when he saw her, all was lost again ;
My arts all baffled by a single glance :
Yes, the proud queen was mistress of my life,
And might have ta'en it : had she known the way
Sp To manage well her easy lover's fondness,
Herod had sign'd the mandate for another,
And not for Mariamne ; then the blow
I meant for her had fall'n on Salome :
But I have made her pride assist my vengeance,
B And I have only now to point the dart,
Which her own hand hath fashion'd, to destroy her.

Thou may'st remember well the fatal time
That blasted all our hopes ; when, Antony
Subdued, Augustus took the reins of empire,
Each eastern monarch trembled on his throne :
Amongst the rest my hapless brother fear'd,
With his protector, he had lost his crown.
Resistance now was vain, and nought remain'd
But to address the conqueror of the world
In lowliest terms, and ask forgiveness of him.
Call back that dreadful day, when Herod, driv'n
Ev'n to despair, beheld proud Mariamne
Spurn at his offer'd love and kind farewell ;

Heard her with anguish heap reproaches on him ;
Call for a father's and a brother's blood,
Shed by her tyrant husband : Herod flew
To me, and told his griefs ; I seiz'd the moment
Propitious to my vengeance, and regain'd
A sister's pow'r o'er his distressful heart ;
Enflam'd his rage, and sharpen'd his despair ;
Dipp'd in fresh poison the envenom'd dart
That pierc'd his soul : then, desp'rate in his wrath,
Thou heard'st him swear t'exterminate the race
Of Hebrews, and destroy its poor remains ;
Condemn the mother, and cut off her sons
From their inheritance : but soon to rage
Succeeded love ; one look from her disarm'd
His vengeance. I, with double eagerness,
Press'd his departure, and at length prevail'd :
He left her ; from that hour I was successful ;
My frequent letters kept up his resentment,
And, absent from her, all his rage return'd :
He blush'd in secret for his weakness past,
And by degrees, as I remov'd the veil,
His eyes were open'd : Zares caught with me
The favourable hour, and painted her
In blackest colours ; told him of her pow'r,
Her int'rest, friends, and the seditious faction,

The partisans of th' Asmonæan race.

But I did more, I rais'd his jealousy ;

He trembled for his glory, and his life :

Continual treasons had alarm'd his soul,

And left it ever open to suspicion :

Whate'er he fears, still ready to believe,

He is not able to distinguish guilt

From innocence : in short, I fix'd his soul,

Guided his hand, and made him sign the mandate.

MAZÆL.

'Twas nobly done : but what will Varus say,

The haughty prætor, will he see unmov'd

A deed so daring ? he's thy master here,

And, unconfirm'd by Rome, thy pow'r is nothing.

From Varus' hand thy brother must receive

His crown ; nor can he act as sovereign here

Till the proud prætor shall restore it to him.

Will Varus, think'st thou, e'er permit a queen,

Left to his care, to fall a sacrifice ?

I know the Romans well, they ne'er forgive

Such rude contempt of their authority.

Thou wilt bring down the storm on Herod's head ;

Their thunder's always ready ; those proud conquerors

Are jealous of their rights, and take, thou know'st,

Peculiar pleasure in the fall of kings.

SALOME.

SALOME.

Fear not for Herod, Cæsar is his friend,
And Varus knows it, therefore will respect him :
Perhaps this Roman means to manage all,
But be it as it may, my aim is vengeance ;
I'm on the verge of glory or of shame ;
To-morrow, nay, to-day may change the scene :
Who knows if e'er hereafter I shall find
An hour propitious to me, who can tell
If Herod will be steady to his purpose ?
I know his weakness, and I must prevent it,
Nor give him time to say, it shall not be.
When it is done, let Varus rage, and Rome
Pour forth her threats, it shall not damp my joys :
The Romans are not here my worst of foes ;
No, I have more to fear from Mariamne ;
I must subdue her rival pow'rs, or perish :
But Varus comes this way, we must avoid him :
Zares e'er now shou'd have been here : I'll hence
And meet him ; fare thee well.—If there be need,
My soldiers at the least alarm are ready,
And will defend us,

102

S C E N E II.

V A R U S, A L B I N U S, M A Z A E L,

W

ATTENDANTS on V A R U S.

V A R U S:

Salome and Mazael—

Sp

They seem to shun us ; in their eyes I read
Their terrors ; guilt hath reason to be fearful,
And dread my presence.—Mazael, stay : go, tell
Thy cruel master his designs are known ;
His wicked instrument is now in chains,
And shou'd have met the death he merited,
But my regard for Herod bids me hope
That he will soon behold the snare they laid.
Punish the traitors, and revenge the cause
Of injur'd virtue : if thou lov'st thy king,
If thou regard'st his honour or his peace,
Calm his wild rage, embitter not his soul
With vile suspicions, and remember, slave,
Rome is the scourge of villainy ; remember
That Varus knows thee ; that he's master here,
And that his eyes are open to detect thee.
Away : let Mariamne be obey'd,
And treated like a queen ; observe her well,
And, if thy life be dear to thee, respect her.

B

M A Z A E L.

MAZAEI.

My Lord —

VARUS.

Begone: you know my last commands;
Reply not, but obey them.

S C E N E III.

VARUS, ALBINUS.

VARUS.

Without thee,
And thy well-timed advice, thou seest, my friend,
The beauteous Mariamne had been lost.

ALBINUS.

Zares' return rais'd my suspicions of him;
His most officious care t'avoid thy presence,
And troubled features, I must own, alarm'd me.

VARUS.

How much I owe thee for th' important service!
By thee she lives; by thee my heart once more
Shall taste its noblest happiness, the best
And fairest treasure of the virtuous mind,
The happiness to succour the oppress'd.

ALBINUS.

Such gen'rous cares befit the soul of Varus;
Thy arm was ever stretch'd to help the wretched;

102

Still hast thou born Rome's thunder thro' the world,
And only conquer'd but to bless mankind;
Wou'd I might say thy pity dictates here,
And not thy love !

V A R U S.

Must love then be the cause ?

Who wou'd not cherish innocence like hers ?

Sp

What heart, howe'er indiff'rent, wou'd not plead
So fair a cause ? who wou'd not dye to save her ?

A L B I N U S.

Thus the deceitful passion hides itself

In virtue's garb, and steals into the heart :

E

Thy hapless flame—

V A R U S.

Albinus, I confess it ;

The wretched Varus dotes on Mariamne :

Thou see'st my naked heart, which fears not thee,

Because thou art my friend : judge then, Albinus,

How must her dangers have alarm'd my soul !

Her safety and her welfare are my own ;

Death in its ugliest form were welcome to me,

If it cou'd make my Mariamne happy.

A L B I N U S.

How alter'd is the noble heart of Varus !

Love has aveng'd himself of all thy slights ;

No longer do I see the virtuous Roman,
Severe and unimpassion'd, 'midst the croud
Of rival beauties, who solicited
His wand'ring eyes, regardless of their charms.

V A R U S.

To virtue then, thou knowst, and her alone,
I paid my vows : in vain corrupted Rome
Offer'd her venal beauties to my eyes ;
Their pride disgusted, and their arts displeas'd ;
False in their vows, and in their vengeance cruel ;
I saw their shameless fronts all cover'd o'er
With foul dishonour : vanity, ambition,
Caprice, and folly, bore the name of love ;
Such conquests were unworthy of thy friend.
At length the pow'r I had so long contemn'd
Indignant saw me from his eastern throne,
And soon subdued ; it was my fate to rule
O'er Syria's melancholy plains : when heav'n
Had to Augustus giv'n the vanquish'd world,
And Herod, midst a croud of kneeling kings,
Fell at his feet, and sued for his protection,
Hither I came, and fatal to my peace.
Was Palæstine, for there I first beheld her.
The melancholy theme of ev'ry tongue
Was Mariamne's woes ; all wept her fate,

Doom'd

102
W
Doom'd to the arms of an inhuman husband,
Who slew the father of his lovely bride :
Thou know'st what mis'ries she had suffer'd since,
Her sorrows only equall'd by her virtue :
Truth, ever banish'd from the courts of kings,
Dwells on her lips, and all the art she knows
Is but the gen'rous care to serve the wretched.
S
Her duty is her law ; her innocence,
Calm and serene, contemns the tyrant's pow'r,
And pardons her oppressor ; ev'n solicits
My aid to save the man who wou'd destroy her.
E
Her virtues, her misfortunes, and her charms
United, are too pow'rful for my soul ;
I love her, my Albinus ; but my love
Is not a passion which one day creates,
And in another is forgotten ; no :
The heart she has subdu'd is not the slave
Of loose desire, but by her virtue fir'd,
Means to revenge but never to betray her.

ALBINUS.

But if the king, my lord, has gain'd from Rome
Permission to return.

VARUS.

Ay, that I fear :

Alas ! myself did move the senate for him.

Perhaps

Perhaps already he returns to empire,
And this abhorred mandate is his own ;
The first sad proof of his authority :
It may be fatal to him. Varus' pow'r
May soon be lost, but O ! his love remains ;
Yes, I will dye in Mariamne's cause ;
The world shall weep her fate, and I revenge it.

END of the FIRST ACT.

A C T II. S C E N E I.

SALOME, MAZAEI.

SALOME.

THOU see'st, we're ruin'd ; Mariamne triumphs,
And Salome's undone : that ling'ring Zares,
How tedious was his voyage, as if the sea
Unwillingly transported him ! whilst Herod
Flies with the winds to empire and to love :
But sea and land, the elements, the heav'ns,
All, all conspire with Varus, to destroy me.

Ambition, thou hast plung'd me deep in woe ;
Why did I listen to thy fatal voice ?
I knew his foolish heart wou'd soon relent ;
Ev'n now I fear he has revok'd the mandate,

And

IO
W
S
E
And all the harvest of my toil is grief
And danger, that still wait on high condition
Stripp'd of its pow'r: already fawning crouds
Adore my rival, and insult my fall:
My feeble glories, all eclips'd by her,
Shall shine no more, for this new deity
Must now be worshipp'd: but this is not all,
My death, I know, must crown the triumph; she
Can never reign whilst Salome survives;
She will not spare a life so fatal to her.
And yet, O shame, O infamous submission!
My pride must stoop to vile dissimulation,
To sooth her vanity with feign'd respect,
And give her joy of—Salome's destruction.

M A Z A E L.

Despair not, Madam, arms may yet be found
To conquer this proud queen: I ever fear'd
Her pow'rful charms, and Herod's weakness for her;
But if I may depend on Zares, still
In the king's bosom dwells determin'd hate,
And he has sworn that she shall die: the blow
Is but suspended till he comes himself
To execute his vengeance; but, mean time,
Whether his heart be sharpen'd by resentment,

Or mov'd by love, it is enough his hand
Once sign'd the mandate : Mariamne soon
Will swell the tempest, and eternal discord
Shall rankle in their hearts : I know them well :
Soon will she light again the torch of hatred,
Revive his doubts, and work her own destruction :
With new disdain will irritate his soul :
Rely upon herself, and mark her ruin.

S A L O M E.

O ! 'tis uncertain ; I can never wait
Such tardy vengeance ; I have surer means ;
Danger has taught me wisdom : this loud rage,
These violent transports of th'impassion'd Varus,
If I observe aright, can never flow
From generosity alone, and pity
Is seldom known by marks like these : the queen
Has charms, and Varus may have charms for her.
I know the pow'r of Mariamne's beauty,
Nor envy her the croud of gazing fools,
Who throw their flatt'ring incense at her feet ;
The dang'rous happiness may cost her dear :
Whether she listens to the Roman's vows,
Or with the conquest only means to sooth
Her fickle pride, it is enough for me,
If it preserves that pow'r I must not lose

O'er

O'er Herod's heart. Take care my faithful spies
Perform their office ; let them be rewarded,
And tell me precious secrets.—Ha ! she comes,
Must I then see her ?

S C E N E. II.

MARIAMNE, ELIZA, SALOME, MAZAEI, NABAL.

SALOME.

Joy to Mariamne :

Herod returns, and Rome this day restores
To me a brother, and to thee a husband.
Thy cruel scorn had rais'd his just resentment,
Which now subsides, and love has quench'd the flame
Which love alone inspir'd : his triumphs past,
His future glories, all the senate's rights
Repos'd in him, the titles he has gain'd,
All brought to lay at Mariamne's feet,
Proclaim thy happiness : enjoy his heart ;
Enjoy his empire ; I am pleas'd to see
Thy virtues thus rewarded ; Salome
Shall lend her aid to join your hands together.

MARIAMNE.

I neither look'd for, nor desir'd your friendship :
I know you, madam, and shall do you justice ;

I know by what mean arts, and treach'rous falshood,
Your pow'rless malice has pursu'd my life.
Perhaps thou think'st my heart is like thy own,
And therefore tremblest ; but thou know'st me not :
Fear nothing, for thy crimes and punishment
Are both beneath my notice : I have seen
Thy base designs, and have forgiven them :
I leave thee to thy conscience, if a heart
Guilty as thine is capable of feeling.

S A L O M E.

I've not deserv'd this bitterness and wrath
From Mariamne : to my honest zeal,
My conduct, and my brother, I appeal
From thy suspicions.

M A R I A M N E.

I've already told thee,
All is forgotten, I am satisfy'd,
And I can pardon, tho' I can't believe thee.

M A Z A E L.

Now, by the pow'r supreme, my royal mistress,
Scarce cou'd my pains—

M A R I A M N E.

Stop, Mazaël, excuse
Is added injury ; obey the king,

That

That is thy duty : fold to my oppressors,
 Thou art their instrument ; perform thy office,
 I shall not stoop to make complaints of thee.
 Thou, Salome, may'st hence, and tell the king

[To Salome.]

The secrets of my soul ; enflame his heart
 Once more with rage ; I shall not strive to calm it :
 Instruct your creatures to deal forth their slander,
 I've left their vile attempts unpunish'd still ;
 Content to use no arms against my foes,
 But blameless virtue, and a just disdain.

MAZAE L.

What haughtiness !

SALOME.

'Twill meet with its reward :
 It is the pride of art to punish folly.

S C E N E III.

MARIAMNE, ELISA, NABAL.

ELISA.

Why, my lov'd mistress, wou'd you thus provoke
 A foe who burns with ardor to destroy you ?
 Perhaps the rage of Herod is suspended
 But for a time, and yet may burst upon you.

Death

Death was departing, and thou call'st him back,
 When thou shoud'st strive to turn his dart aside :
 Thou hast no friend to guard or to defend thee ;
 Varus, thy kind protector, must obey
 The senate's orders, and to distant realms
 Convey its high commands : at his request,
 And by thy kind assistance, Herod gain'd
 His pow'r, and now the tyrant will return
 With double terror : thou hast furnish'd him
 With arms against thyself, and must depend
 On this proud master, to be dreaded more
 Because he loves, because his passion sower'd
 By thy disdain——

MARIAMNE.

My dear Elisa, fly,
 Bring Varus hither : thou art in the right ;
 I see it all ; but I have other cares ;
 My soul is fill'd with more important bus'ness :
 Let Varus come : Nabal, stay thou with me.

S C E N E IV.

MARIAMNE, NABAL.

MARIAMNE.

Thy virtues, thy experience, and thy zeal
 For Mariamne's welfare, have long since

Deserv'd

Deserv'd my confidence : thou know'st my heart,
And all its purposes ; the woes I feel,
And those I fear : thou saw'st my wretched mother,
Driv'n to despair, with tears imploring me
To share her flight : her mind, replete with terror,
Sees ev'ry moment the impetuous Herod,
Yet reeking with the blood of half her race,
Assassinate her dearest Mariamne.
Still she intreats me, with my helpless children,
To fly his wrath, and leave this hated clime ;
The Roman vessels might transport us soon
From Syria's borders to th' Italian shore ;
From Varus I might hope some kind protection,
And from Augustus ; fortune points the way
For my escape, the only path of safety :
And yet, from virtue or from weakness, which
I know not, but my foolish heart recoils
At flying from a husband's arms, and keeps,
Spite of myself, my ling'ring footsteps here.

N A B A L.

Thy fears are groundless ; yet I must admire them,
Because they flow from virtue : thy brave heart,
That fears not death, yet trembles at the thought
Ev'n of imaginary guilt : but cease

. Your

Your causeless doubts ; consider where you are ;
Open your eyes, and mark this fatal palace,
Wet with a father's and a brother's blood.
In vain the king denies the horrid deed ;
Cæsar in vain absolves him from the crime,
Whilst the whole east pronounce him guilty of it.
Think of thy mother's fears, thy injur'd sons,
Thy murder'd father, the king's cruelty,
Thy sister's hatred, and what scarce my tongue
Can mention without horror, tho' thy virtue
Regardless smiles, thy death this day determin'd.
If, undismay'd by such a scene of woe,
Thou art resolv'd to meet and brave thy fate,
O still remember, still defend thy children :
The king hath ta'en away their hopes of empire,
And well thou know'st what dreadful oracles
Long since alarm'd thy fears, when heav'n foretold,
That a strange hand shou'd one day join thy sons
To their unhappy father. A wild Arab,
Implacable and pitiless, already
Hath half fulfill'd the terrible prediction :
After a deed so horrid, may he not
Accomplish all the rest ? From Herod's rage
Nothing is sacred ; who can tell but now,

Ev'n now he comes to act his bloody purpose,
And blot out all our Asmonæan race?
'Tis time to guard against him, to prevent
His guilt, and stop his murth'rous hand ; to save
Those tender victims from a tyrant's sword,
And hide them from the sight of such examples.

Within thy palace from my earliest years
Brought up, and by thy ancestors belov'd,
Thou see'st me ready to partake thy fortunes
Where'er thou go'st : away then ; break thy chains ;
Fly to the justice of a Roman senate ;
Implore them to adopt thy injur'd sons,
And shelter their distress : such innocence
And virtue will astonish great Augustus.
If just and happy is his reign, as fame
Reports, and conquer'd worlds in rapture bend
The knee before him, if he merits all
The honours he has gain'd, he must protect thee.

M A R I A M N E.

My doubts are vanish'd, and I yield to thee ;
To thy advice, and to a mother's tears ;
To my son's danger, to my own hard fate ;
Which dooms me yet perhaps to greater ills

'Than I have suffer'd. Go thou to my mother ;
When night shall throw her sable mantle o'er
This seat of guilt, let some one give me notice
That all is ready ; since it must be done,
I am prepar'd.

S C E N E V.

MARIAMNE, VARUS, ELISA.

VARUS.

I come, great queen, to know
Your last commands ; which, as the law of heav'n,
Shall be reverd : say, must this arm revenge thee ?
Speak, and 'tis done : command, and I obey.

MARIAMNE.

Varus, I'm much indebted to thy goodness,
And, but my sorrows plead their own excuse,
Shou'd not be thus importunate ; I know
Thou lov'st to help the wretched, therefore ask
Thy gen'rous aid : whilst Herod's doubtful fate
Hung in the ballance, and he knew not which
Awaited him, a prison or a throne,
I did sollicit Varus in his favour ;
Spite of his cruelties, against my peace,
Against my int'rest, I perform'd my duty.
Now Mariamne for herself implores

Thy

Thy kind protection ; begs thee to preserve
From most inhuman laws, her hapless sons,
'The poor remains of Syria's royal race.
Long since I shou'd have left these guilty walls,
And ask'd the senate for some safe retreat ;
But whilst the sword of war fill'd half the world
With blood and slaughter, t'was in vain to seek
For refuge in the scene of wild destruction :
Augustus now hath giv'n the nations peace,
And spread his bounties o'er the face of nature :
After the toils of hateful war, resolv'd
To make the world, which he had conquer'd, happy :
He sits supreme o'er tributary kings,
And takes the poor and injur'd to his care :
Who has so fair a title to his justice,
As my unhappy, my defenceless children ?
Brought by their weeping mother from afar
To ask his succour ; he will shelter them,
His gen'rous hand will wipe off all our tears.
I shall not ask him to revenge my cause,
Or punish my proud foes ; it is enough
If my lov'd children, form'd by his example,
And by his justice taught, true Romans soon,
Shall learn to rule of those who rule mankind.
A mother's comfort, and her children's safety,

Depend

Depend on thee: my woes will vanish all
If thou wilt hear me; and thy noble heart
Hath ever been the friend of injur'd virtue:
To thee I owe my life: assist me now,
Remove me, Varus, from this fatal palace;
Grant my benighted steps a friendly guide
To Zidon's ports, where now thy vessels lie.

Not answer me! what means that look of sorrow?
Why art thou silent? O! too well I see
Thou wilt not hear the voice of wretchedness.

V A R U S.

It is not so: I hear, and will obey thee:
My guards shall follow thee to Rome: dispose
Of them, of me; my heart, my life is thine.
Flee from the Tyrant, break the fatal tie;
'Tis punishment enough to be forsaken
By Mariamne: ne'er shall he behold thee;
Thanks to his own injustice; and I feel
Too well there cannot be a fate more cruel.
Forgive me, but the thought of losing thee
Hath drawn the fatal secret from my breast;
I own my crime: but, spite of all my weakness,
Know, my respect is equal to my love:

Varus but wishes to protect thy virtue,
But to revenge thy injuries, and die.

MARIAMNE.

I hoped the great preserver of my life
Wou'd prove the guardian of my honour too;
And to his pity only thought I ow'd
His kind assistance: ne'er did I expect
That he, of all men, shou'd increase my sorrows;
Or that, to crown the woes of Mariamne,
I shou'd be forc'd to tremble at thy goodness,
And blush for ev'ry favour I receiv'd:
Yet, think not, Varus, that thy passion, thus
Deleard, shall rob thee of my gratitude:
My constant friendship shall be ever thine;
I will forget thy love, but not thy virtues:
Thou hadst my praise and my esteem till now,
But longer converse may deprive thee of it;
For thy sake therefore, Varus, I must leave thee.

S C E N E VI.

VARUS, ALBINUS.

ALBINUS.

I fear your're troubled, Sir; your colour changes.

VARUS.

Albinus, I must own, my spirits droop;
Pity, my friend, the weakness of a heart

That

That never lov'd before : alas ! I knew not
How strong my fetters were, but now I feel,
Nor can I break them : with what sweet demeanor,
And lovely softness, did she chide my passion ;
Calm and unruffled, how her tranquil prudence
Taught me my duty, and enforc'd her own ;
How I ador'd her ev'n when she repuls'd me !
I've lost all hope, yet love her more than ever :
Gods ! for what dreadful trial of my faith
Am I reserv'd ?

ALBINUS.

Wilt thou then aid her flight ?

VARUS.

'Tis a sad office.

ALBINUS.

Art thou pleas'd so well
With her disdain, as thus to make thyself
Unhappy, and promote thy own destruction ?
What dost thou purpose ?

VARUS.

Can I e'er forsake her ?
Can I rebel against her laws ? my heart
Were then unworthy of her. Hence my doubts,
'Twas Mariamne spoke, and I obey :
Quick let her leave the Tyrant ; let her seek

Augustus; she has cause to fly, and Varus
 Has none to murmur or complain; at least
 She leaves me the sweet pleasure to reflect,
 That I have liv'd and acted but for her;
 Have broke her chains, have sav'd her precious life:
 Nay more: for I will sacrifice my love,
 Fly from those dang'rous charms that wou'd betray me,
 And imitate the virtue I adore.

END of the SECOND ACT.

A C T III. S C E N E I.

VARUS, NABAL, ALBINUS, ATTENDANTS on VARUS.

N A B A L.

THE king, my lord, the happy Herod, comes
 Triumphant, and the Hebrews flock in crouds
 To meet him: Salome, alarm'd and fearful
 Of her declining interest, joins his train
 Of fawning courtiers, sooths his pride, and strives
 By ev'ry art to gain him to her purpose;
 The priests attend, and strew their palms before him.
 With Herod comes the faithful Idamas,
 Deputed by his sov'reign to attend

The

M A R I A M N E.

151

The noble Varus ; he will soon be here.
 Still hath he prov'd himself the constant friend
 Of Mariamne, and by wholesome counsels
 Soften'd the rage of his impetuous master :
 The queen, still wav'ring and irresolute,
 Condemns herself ; her rigid virtue fears
 To do what danger tells her must be done :
 She quits the palace, then returns ; mean while
 Her anxious mother, falling at her feet,
 Bathes them in tears, points to her weeping children,
 And trembling begs her to depart : she stops,
 And doubts, and much I fear will stay too long :
 'Tis thou must hasten her ; on thee alone
 Depends the safety of the noblest being
 Heav'n e'er gave birth to. O preserve her ; save
 The race august sprung from a line of kings ;
 Save Mariamne. Are your guards all ready ?
 May I inform her of it ?

VARUS.

All's prepar'd :
 I gave them orders ; she may go this moment.

NABAL.

And wilt thou too permit a faithful servant
 To follow his lov'd mistress ?

H 3

VARUS.

VARUS.

Go with her,
Wait on her steps, and guard her as thy life :
This hateful place deserves her not : may heav'n,
In pity to her sorrows, smile upon her ;
Light up a fairer sun to gild her journey,
And bid the waves in smoother currents flow,
Obedient to the sacred charge they bear !
Thou, good old man, may'st follow and attend her ;
Thou art too happy, but thou hast deserv'd it.

S C E N E II.

VARUS, ALBINUS, ATTENDANTS on VARUS.

VARUS.

Already Herod comes ; the trumpet's sound
Speaks his return ; unwelcome sound to me !
I dread his presence : cruel as he is,
Instant his wrath may fall on Mariamne :
Wou'd she had left for ever these sad seats
Of guilt and horror ! wou'd I might partake
Her flight ! but O ! the more I love, the more
I must avoid her : t'were in me a crime
To follow her ; and all that Varus can—
But Idamas approaches.

S C E N E

S C E N E III.

VARUS, IDAMAS, ALBINUS, ATTENDANTS,
on VARUS.

IDAMAS.

Ee'r the king,

My royal master, comes, with gratitude
To pay thy bounties, and receive from thee
The holy sceptre, say, wilt thou permit me?—

VARUS.

No more : your king may spare this idle homage,
These practis'd arts of visionary friendship
Amongst the great, drawn forth with pompous splendor
But to amuse the gaping multitude,
And foreign to the heart : but say, at length
Rome has consented ; Herod is your king ;
Doth he deserve to reign ? Is the queen safe,
And will he spare the blood of innocence ?

IDAMAS.

May the just gods, who hate the perjur'd man,
Open his eyes, now blinded by imposture !
But who shall dive into his secret thoughts,
Or trace th' emotions of his troubled soul ?
Nought can we draw from him but sullen silence ;
Or if perchance the name of Mariamne

Escape his lips, he sighs, and raves ; this moment
Gives secret orders, and the next revokes them :
Herod detests the race from whence she sprang,
And hates her more because he lov'd too well.
Perfidious Zares, by thy order stopp'd,
And by thy order free'd, th'artificer
Of calumny and fraud, will serve the cause
Of subtle Salome, whilst Mazaël lends
His secret aid : the jealous Herod listens
To their suggestions ; they besiege him closely ;
And their officious hatred still keeps truth
At distance from him : this great conqueror,
Who made so many potent monarchs tremble,
This king, whose noble deeds ev'n Rome admir'd,
Whose name yet fills all Asia with alarms,
In his own house beholds his glories fade :
Torn by suspicions, and o'erwhelm'd with grief ;
Led by his sister, hated by his wife :
I pity him, and fear for Mariamne.
Say, wilt thou not protect her ?

V A R U S.

'Tis enough :

Albinus, follow me, the queen's in danger :
Away, for I must save the innocent.

I D A M A S.

IDAMAS.

Will you not wait then for the king?

VARUS.

I know

I shou'd receive him here : it is my duty,
For so the senate wills : but other cares
Inspire me now, and other int'rests guide :
'Tis my first duty to protect the wretched.

[Exit Varus.]

IDAMAS.

What storms do I foresee? what new distress
Will soon o'ertake us? Now, O Israel's God,
Change Herod's heart!

S C E N E IV.

HEROD, MAZAEI, IDAMAS, ATTENDANTS
on HEROD

HEROD.

Varus avoid me too!

What horrors meet me here on ev'ry side!
Good heav'n! can Herod inspire nought but hatred
And terror to mankind? Is ev'ry heart
Thus shut against me? To myself disgustful,
My people, and my queen; with grief oppress'd
I re-ascend my throne, and only come

H 5.

To

To see the sorrows my own hand hath made.
O heav'n !

MAZAEI.

Be calm, my lord, let me intreat you.

HEROD.

Wretch that I am, what have I done !

MAZAEI.

Ha ! weeping !

Shall Herod weep, the great th' illustrious king,
The dread of Parthia, and the friend of Rome,
For wisdom and for valour long renown'd !
O ! think my lord, of those distinguish'd honours
Which Antony and victory bestow'd ;
Think of thy fame, when seen by great Augustus,
He chose thee from a croud of conquer'd kings,
And mark'd thee for his friend : call back the time,
When great Jerusalem, by thee subdued,
Submitted to thy laws ; by thee defended,
Once more she shines with all her antient lustre,
And sees her sov'reign crown'd with fair success :
Never was king in peace or war more happy.

HEROD.

There is no happiness on earth for me ;
Fate points its poison'd arrows at my breast ;
And, to complete my woes, I have deserv'd them.

IDAMAS.

I D A M A S.

Permit me, Sir, the freedom to observe,
Your throne, by fears and jealousies surrounded,
Wou'd stand more firmly on love's nobler basis:
The king who makes his people's happiness
Secures his own: thy soul, thus rack'd with tortures,
Might trace the poison'd waters to their spring.
O, my lord, suffer not malicious tongues
To wound the peace and honour of thy life;
Nor servile flatt'ers to estrange the hearts
Of those who long to serve their royal master:
Israel shall then enamour'd with thy virtues—

H E R O D.

And think'st thou Herod might again be lov'd?

M A Z A E L.

Zares, my lord, still faithful to his charge,
Burns with the same unwearied zeal to serve thee:
He comes from Salome, and begs admittance.

H E R O D.

What! both for ever persecute me! No!
Let not that monster e'er appear before me;
I've heard too much already: hence, begone,
And leave me to myself: what shall I do
To calm my troubled soul? Stay, Idamas,
And, Mazaël, stay...

S C E N E

S C E N E V.

HEROD, MAZAEI, IDAMAS.

HEROD.

Behold this dreadful monarch,
This mighty king, who made the nations tremble ;
Who knew so well to conquer and to reign,
To break his chains, and make the world admire
His wisdom and his pow'r ; behold him now,
Alas ! how little like his former self !

MAZAEI.

All own thy greatness, and adore thy virtues.

IDAMAS.

One heart alone resists, and that perhaps
May still be thine.

HEROD.

No : Herod's a Barbarian,
Unworthy of his throne.

IDAMAS.

Thy grief is just,
And if for Mariamne——

HEROD.

Fatal name !

'Tis that condemns me ; that reproaches still
My tortur'd soul with cruelty and weakness.

MAZAEI.

MAZ AEL.

My lord, your goodness but augments her hatred ;
She loaths your sight, and flies from your embraces.

HEROD.

I courted hers.

MAZ AEL.

Indeed, my lord ?

HEROD.

I did :

This sudden change, this grief that hangs upon me,
These shameful tears, do they not all declare
That Herod is return'd from Mariamne ?
With love and hatred mingled in my soul,
I left the croud of flatt'ers in my court,
And flew to her : but what was my reward ?
How did we meet ! in anger, frowns, and strife :
In her indignant eyes I read my fate,
And my injustice : she scarce deign'd to cast
A look upon me ; ev'n my tears avail'd not ;
They only serv'd to make her scorn me more.

MAZ AEL.

You see, my lord, her soul's implacable,
And never will be soften'd by indulgence ;
It but enflames her pride.

HEROD.

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S C E N E V.

HEROD, MAZAEI, IDAMAS.

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I left the croud of flatterers in my court,
And flew to her : but what was my reward ?
How did we meet ! in anger, frowns, and strife :
In her indignant eyes I read my fate,
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HEROD.

HEROD.

I know she hates me ;
 But I've deserv'd it, and I must forgive her :
 She has but too much cause from one so guilty.

MAZAE.

Guilty, my lord ? hast thou forgot her slights,
 Contempt, and pride, and wrath, and fierce resentment ;

Her father's plot, her own designs against you,
 And all her race your mortal foes ? Hircanus
 Had oft betray'd you ; th' Afmonæan league
 Was firmly knit ; and by such dang'rous pow'rs,
 That nothing but a master-stroke cou'd save——

HEROD.

No matter : that Hircanus was her father,
 I shou'd have spar'd him ; but I only listen'd
 To proud ambition, and the love of empire :
 My cruel policy destroy'd her race ;
 I kill'd the father, and proscrib'd his daughter :
 I wanted but to hate and to oppress,
 And heav'n, to punish me, hath made me love her.

IDAMAS.

To feel a passion for a worthy object
 Is not a weakness in us, but a virtue,

Worthy

Worthy of ev'ry good which heav'n hath giv'n thee;
Esteem thy love amongst its choicest blessings.

HEROD.

What hath my rashness done! ye sacred manes,
Hircanus, Oh!

MAZAEEL.

Banish the sad remembrance,
And grant, kind heav'n, the queen too may forget
it!

HEROD.

Unhappy father! more unhappy husband!
The inj'ries I have done my Mariamne
Make her more dear: O! if her heart—her faith—
But I have stay'd too long: now, Idamas,
I'll make amends for all; go, haste, and tell her,
My soul, obedient to her will, shall lay
My throne, my life, my glory at her feet:
Amongst her sons I'll chuse a successor.
She has accus'd my sister as the cause
Of her misfortunes, henceforth I disclaim her;
A nearer tie demands the sacrifice,
And Salome must yield to Mariamne:
My queen shall rule with pow'r unlimited!

MAZAEEL.

MAZAEI.

My lord, you will not——

HEROD.

Yes : I am resolv'd :

I know her now ; she is the choicest gift
Of bounteous heav'n ; as such I shall revere her :
What cannot love, the mighty conqu'ror, do ?
To Mariamne I shall owe my virtue.
In savage pomp, and barb'rous majesty,
Too long hath Asia seen her sov'reign rule
Respected by his people ; fear'd, admir'd,
Yet hated still ; with crouds of worshippers,
But not one friend. My sister, whom long time
This foolish heart believ'd, hath ne'er consulted
My happiness, my int'rest, or my fame :
For Salome, more cruel than myself,
And more revengeful, dipp'd her hands in blood,
And ruled my subjects with a rod of iron :
Whilst Mariamne felt for the unhappy,
Forgot her own distress to pity theirs,
And told me all their sorrows : but 'tis past :
Henceforth I will be just, but not severe ;
I'll strive to please her by promoting still
The public weal : Judah shall bless my reign,

For

For I am chang'd. From this auspicious hour,
Far from my throne, shall ev'ry jealous fear
Be now remov'd : I will dry up the tears
Of the oppress'd, and reign o'er Pakestine,
Not as a tyrant, but a citizen ;
Gain ev'ry heart to merit Mariamne's.
O seek her, tell her how my soul repents ;
That my remorse is equal to my rashness.
Run, fly, begone, and instantly return.
What do I see ? my sister ? hence : O heav'n,
Finish the woes of my unhappy life !

S C E N E VI.

HEROD, SALOME.

SALOME.

Well, Sir, you've seen your dear deceitful foe,
And suffer'd more affronts ; I know you have.

HEROD.

Madam, permit me to inform you, this
Is not a time to add to my misfortunes ;
I wou'd remove them : my imperious temper
Made me more fear'd indeed, but more unhappy :
Too long already o'er this house of sorrow
Hath vengeance pour'd her black and deadly poison :

The

The queen and you, thus at perpetual variance,
Wou'd be a spring of endless miſ'ry ; therefore,
My ſiſter, for our mutual happineſs,
For thy repoſe and mine, 'tis beſt to part ;
Immediately, away : it muſt be ſo.

SALOME.

What do I hear ! O fatal enemy !

HEROD.

A king commands, a brother begs it of thee :
O may he ne'er again be forc'd to give
One cruel order, ne'er take vengeance more,
Nouriſh ſuſpicions, or ſhed guiltleſs blood !
Thou ſhalt no longer make my life a burthen ;
Complain of me, lament thyſelf, but go.

SALOME.

Alas ! my lord, I ſhall make no complaints ;
Since I am doom'd to baniſhment by thee,
It muſt be juſt, and fitting that I ſhou'd be ;
For I have ever learn'd to make thy will
My law : if thou command'ſt, I muſt obey ;
I never ſhall reſent the injury,
Or call on nature and the ties of blood,
Or to atteſt, or vindicate my wrongs ;
The voice of nature's ſeldom heard by kings,

The ties of blood are much too weak to bind them :
I will not boast that tender friendship now
Whose zeal offends thee ; much less wou'd I call
To thy remembrance all my service past ;
One look I see from Mariamne soon
Effaces all : but can'st thou ever think
She will forget th' attempt upon her life
Which Herod made ? thee she must fear : thou there-
fore
Shoud'st dread her more : thou know'st her vows, her
thoughts
Are bent against thee, and whose counsels now
Shall stay her vengeance ? Where's the faithful heart
Devoted to thee ? where's the watchful eye,
Ever awake, to guard the life of Herod ?
Who shall unravel all her subtle plots,
Or who restrain her wrath ? Dost thou believe,
When thou hast put thy life within her pow'r,
That love will plead for thee ? O no ! such hate,
Such scorn as her's, such desperate resentment—

HEROD.

Permit me, Salome, at least to doubt,
At least delude me with the flatt'ring hopes.
I may regain her heart : in this alone
I wish to be deceiv'd : shew some regard,

Some

Some kind compassion for a brother's weakness :
 I must believe, thou know'st I've too much reason,
 Thy hatred was a barrier to our love :
 Thy malice harden'd Mariamne's heart,
 And, but for thee, I had been less detested.

S A L O M E.

Coud'st thou but know, O ! coud'st thou but conceive
 To what excess——

H E R O D.

Sister, I'll hear no more ;
 Let Mariamne threaten ; let her take
 This loathsome life, for I am weary of it ;
 So shall I perish by the hand I love.

S A L O M E.

It wou'd be cruel to deceive you longer
 By guilty silence, or conceal her crimes :
 I know the dang'rous hazard that I run
 By serving you ; but I must speak, tho' death
 Were my reward : poor, blind, deluded husband,
 Enslav'd by love for a vile worthless woman ;
 Know Mariamne now, and know thy shame :
 'Tis not her pride, her hatred, and disdain,
 Shou'd make thee loath her, but that—she is false ;
 She loves another.

H E R O D.

HEROD.

Mariamne love

Another! barb'rous Sister! to suspect
Her spotless virtue! Is it thus thou mean'st
To murder Herod? Are these poison'd darts
The best farewell that thou can'st leave thy brother?
To light up discord, shame, and rage, and horror,
In my distracted mind! Cou'd Mariamne —
But thou already hast too oft deceiv'd me;
Too long have I giv'n credit to thy falsehood:
Now heav'n has punish'd my credulity,
But it has ever been my fate to love
Those who abhor me. You are all my foes;
All sworn to persecute the wretched Herod.

SALOME.

Far from thy sight then——

HEROD.

Stir not hence, I charge thee;
Another is belov'd? Speak, tell me, who
Must fall a sacrifice to Herod's vengeance?
Pursue thy work, and make my woes complete.

SALOME.

Since I must speak——

HEROD.

HEROD.

Strike here: behold my heart:

Who has dishonour'd me? Whoe'er he be,
 Thou, Salome, perhaps may'st answer for it,
 For thou art guilty: thou hast undeceiv'd me:
 Now at thy peril speak.

SALOME.

No matter.

HEROD.

Well——

SALOME.

'Tis——

S C E N E VII.

HEROD, SALOME, MAZAE.

MAZAE.

Bear not this indignity, my lord,
 The queen is fled, accompany'd by Varus.

HEROD.

Varus, and Mariamne! gods! where am I?

MAZAE.

Varus, my lord, and all his troops have left
 The palace, and a secret band is plac'd
 About the walls to favour her retreat;
 Your Mariamne will be lost for ever.

HEROD.

HEROD.

The charm is broke, and day shines full upon me :
Come, Salome, acknowledge now thy brother,
And know him by his wrath ; let us surprise
The infidel : now judge if Herod still
Acts like himself, and like himself revenges.

END of the THIRD ACT.

A C T IV. S C E N E I.

SALOME, MAZAE.

MAZAE.

Never did fair appearance gild so well
The specious cov'ring of a happy falsehood :
With what dexterity I play'd on him,
And blended truth with artifice ! But why
Art thou dejected ? art thou not restor'd
To Herod's favor ? Mariamne lost,
Beyond recov'ry lost ? Thou art reveng'd ;
The king's distracted. I am shock'd myself
When I behold the work of my own hands :
Thou too hast seen the horrid spectacle,
The trembling slaves all butcher'd by his hand.

The

The Queen half-dead, and fainting by their side,
And Herod's arm uplifted as in act
To murder her : the children bath'd in tears
Fall at his feet, and offer their own lives
To save their mother's : can'st thou wish for more,
Or hast thou aught to fear ?

SALOME.

I fear the king,
I fear those fatal charms which he adores ;
That arm which oft uplifted falls as oft
Inactive down ; that anger which soon kindled
Is soon extinct ; which, doubtful still and blind,
Exhausts its feeble pow'rs in sudden transports :
My triumphs, Mazaël, are uncertain still ;
Twice has my fate been chang'd this day, and twice
To hatred love succeeded : if he sees
The queen again, we are undone.

S C E N E. II.

HEROD, SALOME, MAZAEËL, GUARDS.

MAZAEËL.

He comes,
And seems disturb'd : what horror in his aspect !

SALOME.

Say, Herod, hast thou taken ample vengeance ?

MAZAEËL.

MAZAEI.

I hope my royal master will forgive
His faithful servant, who thus dares to speak
Touching the queen : but Varus is her safe-guard ;
Prevent his dark designs, and save thyself :
The haughty prætor, resolute and bold,
Will make a merit of destroying thee.

HEROD.

Alas ! my sister, how have I been treated !
Deceiv'd, betray'd ! help me to rail, to curse
This dear ungrateful woman : now my heart
Rests all its hopes on thy assisting friendship :
Thou, Salome, wert made a sacrifice
To my unhappy love for Mariamne ;
I number'd thee amongst my worst of foes ;
For her unkindness did I punish thee ;
But thou hast seen my tenderness betray'd,
And, e'er this day is past, we'll be reveng'd :
Yes, she shall suffer for her fatal pow'r
O'er Herod's heart, that sigh'd for her alone.
O how have I ador'd, and how detested,
The faithless Mariamne ! and thou, Varus,
Shalt feel my wrath ; thou art a Roman, therefore
Thy life is safe ; but I can punish thee
In blood more precious, and a dearer self :

Thou shalt behold the object of thy love,
Who has prefer'd thee to her hated lord,
Thou shalt behold her soon expire in torment
Before thy eyes : dost thou not think Augustus
Will praise my just severity ?

SALOME.

No doubt

He will, my lord, and wou'd himself advise it.
On the same altar where his friends adore him,
He sheds the blood of foes : he teaches kings
To rule and to be fear'd ; let Herod mark
And follow his example ; thus alone
Thy life can be secure : the queen must stand
Condemn'd by all, and thou be justify'd.

MAZAE.

But make good use of this important moment,
Whilst Varus is yet absent, and his forces
Far from our walls ; now seize her, and complete
Thy easy vengeance.

SALOME.

Above all conceal

From Israel's sons thy purpose and thy grief,
And spare thyself the horror of a fight
So dreadful ; fly from this unhappy place,

The witness of thy shame, that must recall
A thousand mournful images ; O hide
From ev'ry eye thy sorrows and thy tears.

HEROD.

No : I must see her ; face to face confound her ;
Force her to answer ; hear her poor excuses :
I'll make her tremble at th'approach of death,
And ask that pardon she shall ne'er obtain.

SALOME.

My lord, you will not see her ?

HEROD.

Fear me not ;
Her doom is fix'd : vainly she hopes that love
Will plead her cause ; my heart is shut against her :
Those eyes, which once were dang'rous to my peace,
Are harmless now ; her presence will but raise
My anger, not my love. Guards, bring her hither ;
I'll only see, and hear, and punish her.

Sister, I wou'd be private for a moment :

[To the attendants.

Send Mariamne here : you may retire *[To the guards.*

S C E N E III.

HEROD alone.

Art thou resolv'd to see her then ? O Herod,
 Can'st thou depend on thy own treach'rous heart ?
 Is not her guilt too plain, and have I not
 Been basely injur'd ? Why then seek for more ?
 What profit can this interview afford me ?
 I know her thoughts already, know she hates me ;
 Why lives she yet ? revenge, thou art too slow !
 Unworthy Herod, coward as thou art,
 Go, see her, pardon, fight again, and court
 Your haughty tyrant. No : to-night she dyes :
 I've sworn it : th'Asmonæan blood shall flow ;
 I hate the race, and am abhorr'd by them.
 But see, she comes, heav'n ! what a mournful sight !

S C E N E IV.

MARIAMNE, HEROD, ELIZA, GUARDS.

ELIZA.

Rouse up your spirits, Madam, 'tis the king.

MARIAMNE.

Where am I ; whither do you lead me ? O
 'Tis death to look upon him.

HEROD.

HEROD.

How my soul
Shudders at sight of her!

MARIAMNE.

Eliza, help,
Support me, I grow faint.

ELIZA.

This way.

MARIAMNE.

What torment!

HEROD.

What shall I say to her? O heav'n!

MARIAMNE.

Well, Sir,

Your pleasure: wherefore am I order'd here?
Is it to yield thee up the poor remains
Of hated life, destructive to us both?
Take it; strike here; I'll thank thee for the blow;
The only gift I wou'd accept from thee.

HEROD.

Then thou shalt have it: but first speak, defend,
If possible, thy shameful flight, and tell me wherefore,
When Herod's heart, to thee alone indulgent,

So oft offended, yet as oft forgave thee,
The partner of my empire and my glory,
What could'st thou purpose by so black a crime?

M A R I A M N E.

Is that a question fit for thee to ask?
But 'tis not now a time for vain reproaches;
Yet sure, my lord, if wretched Mariamne,
Far from these walls had sought some kind retreat,
If she for once had dar'd to violate
A husband's rights, and swerve from her obedience,
Think of my royal ancestors; remember
My suff'rings past, my present danger; think
On these, my lord, and blame me if thou dar'st.

H E R O D.

But when thy guilty passion for a traitor,
For Vatus——

M A R I A M N E.

Stop thy bold licentious tongue:
My life is thine: but do not cover me
With foul dishonour; let me pass at least
Without a blush unspotted to the grave:
Do not forget the sacred tie that bound us,
That join'd my honour and my fame with thine,

As such I have preserv'd them : look on me ;
Strike here ; thou'rt welcome : but remember still
I am thy wife ; pay some respect to me,
And to thyself.

H E R O D.

O ! it becomes thee well
To talk of sacred ties which thou hast broke :
Perfidious woman ! wou'd not the proud scorn
And hatred thou hast shewn alone condemn thee ?

M A R I A M N E.

Since thou already hast decreed my fate,
What wou'd avail my hatred or my love ?
What right hast thou to Mariamne's heart,
Which thou hast fill'd with sorrow, and despair,
And anguish : thou who, for these five years past,
Hast mark'd my days with bitterness and woe ;
Thou fell destroyer of my guiltless parents,
Where is my murther'd father ? cruel Herod !
O ! if thy rage had sought no blood but mine,
Heav'n be my witness, I had lov'd thee still,
And blest thee in my latest hour : but O !
Do not pursue me, Herod, after death ;
Do not extend my woes beyond the grave,
Preserve my children ; do not punish them,

Because they're mine, but act a father's part :
Perhaps hereafter thou wilt know their mother ;
Perhaps shalt one day pity, when too late,
The heart, which, never but by thee suspected,
Cou'd not disguise its griefs ; the heart which still
Preserv'd its virtue, and, but for thyself,
Had lov'd thee, Herod.

HEROD.

Ha ! what do I hear !
What charm, what secret pow'r controuls my rage,
And steals me from myself ? O Mariamne !

MARIAMNE.

O cruel Herod !

HEROD.

O my foolish heart !

MARIAMNE.

For pity's sake behold my wretchedness,
And take this hated life.

HEROD.

My own is thine,
For ever thine ; thou art my Mariamne :
Banish thy fears ; O thou wer't sure to triumph
When I beheld thee ; make no more excuses,
Thou art, thou must be innocent : I now
Must tremble in my turn, and ask forgiveness :

Wilt

Wilt thou not pardon him who pardon'd thee?
Were our hearts made but to detest each other,
To persecute ourselves? Let us at once
End all our fears and all our pains together;
Give me thy love, give me thy hand again.

MARIAMNE.

Can'st thou desire this hand? O heav'n, thou know'st
Herod's is stain'd with blood.

HEROD.

It is: I flew

Thy father, and my king; but wherefore did it?
To reign with thee: and what was my reward?
Thy hatred; a reward I well deserv'd:
I have no right to murmur or complain;
Thy father's death, and the injustice done
To thy unhappy children, are the least
Of Herod's guilt; it reach'd ev'n Mariamne,
And for a moment I detested thee;
Nay more, gave ear to foul suspicions of thee;
'Twill be the height of virtue to forgive me;
The more my crimes, the more thy soul will shew
Its greatness: thou hast seen my weakness for thee;
Take heed that thou abuse it not; for love
And rage, thou know'st, by turns possess my soul;

O give it ease: thou turn'st aside thy eyes,
Speak, Mariamne.—

M A R I A M N E.

Such tumultuous transports
Can never spring, I fear, from true repentance:
Art thou sincere, and may I trust thee, Herod?

H E R O D.

Thou may'st: what is there which thou can'st not do
If thou wilt cease to hate me? 'twas thy scorn
That rais'd such furious tempests in my soul;
It was the loss of Mariamne's heart
That made me savage, barb'rous, and inhuman:
My tears shall wash away the mutual stain
Of both our faults: and here I swear—

S C E N E V.

H E R O D, M A R I A M N E, E L I Z A, a G U A R D.

G U A R D.

My lord,

The people are in arms; they have destroy'd
The scaffold rais'd by Salome's command,
And slain the officers of justice: Varus
Assumes the sov'reign pow'r, he comes this way,
And ev'ry moment we expect him here.

H E R O D.

HEROD.

Ha! can it be! thus at the very instant
When I was falling at thy feet, to raise
Thy minion—

MARIAMNE

O my Lord, can you believe—

HEROD.

Thou seek'st my life, and thou shalt have it, traitress;
But I will drag thee with me to the tomb,
Spite of thyself, we there shall be united.
A guard there, seize, and watch her.

S C E N E VI.

HEROD, MARIAMNE, SALOME, MAZAEI,
ELIZA, GUARDS.

SALOME.

O, my brother,
Venture not forth; for the rebellious Hebrews
Are rais'd against you, and demand your life;
Repeating still the name of Mariamne:
They come ev'n now to seize and take her from thee.

HEROD.

Away. I'll meet them unappall'd: but thou
Shalt answer for this insult: to thy care
I leave her, Salome, guard well thy charge.

M A R I-

MARIAMNE.

I fear not death, but call high heav'n to witness—

MAZ AEL.

My Lord, the Romans are already here.

HEROD.

And must I leave the guilty wretch unpunish'd ?

No : she shall bleed : it must be so : alas !

In my sad state I can determine nothing ;

Death wou'd be welcome ; I'll away and meet it.

END of the FOURTH ACT.

A C T V. S C E N E I.

MARIAMNE, ELIZA, GUARDS.

MARIAMNE.

Soldiers, retire, and leave your queen at least
The mournful privilege to weep alone.

[The guards retire to a corner of the stage.]

Just heav'n ! is this at last my wretched fate ?

My noble blood, my tide to a throne,

All that cou'd promise years of happiness,

And days of pleasure, turn'd to deadly poison,

Have

Have fill'd my cup with bitterness and woe.
O birth ! O youth ! and thou destructive beauty,
Whose dang'rous lustre but inflam'd my pride,
Flatt'ring delusion ! unsubstantial shade
Of fancy'd bliss, O how hast thou deceiv'd me !
Beneath my fatal throne for ever lurk'd
Anguish and care, digging the grave that now
Gapes to receive the dying Mariamne.
In Jordan's flood I saw my brother perish,
My father massacred by bloody Herod,
Who now has doom'd to death a guiltless wife :
My virtue still remain'd, and that the tongue
Of slander strives to wound : thou pow'r supreme !
Whose chastisements severe are but the proofs
Of innocence, I ask not for thy aid,
Nor for thy vengeance ; my great ancestors
Taught me to look on death unmerited
Without a fear : take then my guiltless blood,
But O ! defend my fame : command the tyrant
To spare my mem'ry ; let not clam'rous falsehood
Insult my ashes : virtue is reveng'd
When she's respected. But what new alarm,
What dreadful shrieks are these ? the palace rings
With loud confusion, and the din of arms :

I am perhaps the cause, they fight for me :
They force the doors : ha ! what do I see ?

S C E N E I I.

MARIAMNE, VARUS, ELIZA,
ALBINUS, SOLDIERS.

VARUS.

Away :

Hence ruffians ; you who hold your queen in bondage,
Vile Hebrews, hence : — you, Romans, do your office.

[Herod's guards go off, chain'd by Varus's soldiers.]

Now, Mariamne, thou art free ; thou see'st
The tyrant cou'd not bar my entrance here :
Mazael lies bath'd in his perfidious blood ;
At least my arm hath half aveng'd the cause
Of injur'd majesty : haste, Mariamne,
Seize the propitious moment, and secure
A shelter from the storm : let us begone.

MARIAMNE.

My lord, I cannot now accept thy bounty ;
After the vile reproach which Herod cast
On my fair fame, I shou'd indeed deserve it,
Were I imprudent to receive the aid
Thou proffer'st : I have much more cause to dread
Thy kindness now than his barbarity ;

'Twould

'T wou'd be disgraceful thus to owe my life
To Varus ; honour says ev'n this is guilt,
And death alone can expiate my offence.

VARUS.

What woud'st thou do ? alas ! unhappy princess,
A moment may destroy thee : the time presses ;
Still we're in arms, and Herod may succeed :
Dost thou not fear his rage and his despair ?

MARIAMNE.

No : I fear nought but shame ; and know my duty.

VARUS.

Am I then doom'd for ever to offend you ?
But I will do the work of vengeance for thee,
Spite of thyself : once more I'll to the field ;
And, if the Tyrant comes across me there,
This arm ——

MARIAMNE.

Stop, Varus ; I detest a triumph
So dearly bought : know, Sir, the life of Herod
Demands my care : his rights ——

VARUS.

Are forfeited

By his ingratitude.

M A R I

MARIAMNE.

The sacred tie —

VARUS.

Is broken.

MARIAMNE.

Duty hath united us.

VARUS.

But guilt divorces; therefore do not stay me,
Revenge thyself, and save so many virtues.

MARIAMNE.

Thou woud'st disgrace them.

VARUS.

He wou'd take thy life.

MARIAMNE.

Yet his is sacred, still to Mariamne.

VARUS.

He kill'd thy father.

MARIAMNE.

Varus, I know well

What Herod did, and what I ought to do.
Patient, I'll wait the fury of the storm,
Nor by his crimes wou'd justify my own.

VARUS.

O noble, brave, unconquerable heart!
Ye gods, how many virtues have conspir'd

To swell this tyrant's guilt ! O Mariamne !
 The more thou shalt disclaim my proffer'd service,
 The more am I resolv'd to disobey thee.
 Thy honour disapproves what mine commands ;
 But nought shall stop me, nought intimidate :
 I go to search the tyrant, and repair
 The hours I've lost in not revenging thee.

MARIAMNE.

My lord ——

S C E N E I I I .

MARIAMNE, ELIZA, GUARDS.

MARIAMNE.

He's gone, and wou'd not hear me : heav'n
 Let not more blood be shed ; O spare my subjects ;
 Pour all thy wrath on me, and spare ev'n Herod !

S C E N E I V .

MARIAMNE, ELIZA, NABAL, GUARDS.

MARIAMNE.

O Nabal, art thou here ? what hast thou done
 With my dear children ? where's my mother ?

NABAL.

Safe :

The wrath of Herod reaches not to them :
 Thou art the only object of his fury,

Which

Which kindles at the hateful name of Varus :
If he is conquer'd, Mariamne dies.
The barb'rous Zares is already sent
With secret orders hither ; thou may'st guess
The purport, therefore now exert thy pow'r :
The people love thee ; on their loyal zeal
Thou may'st rely ; the sight of thee will raise
Their drooping hearts ; let 'em behold thee : fly,
My royal mistress, let us call the priests,
All Judah's sons will rise to guard the race
Of their lov'd kings : at length the hour is come,
To conquer or to die : let me intreat thee —

M A R I A M N E.

True courage lies in knowing how to suffer,
And not in stirring up rebellious crouds
Against their sov'reign : I shou'd blush to think,
That, anxious for itself, my fearful heart
Had ever form'd a wish for his destruction,
Or rais'd my hopes of safety on his death :
No : heav'n this moment has inspir'd my breast
With rage less guilty, and a nobler purpose :
Herod suspects me, he shall know me now ;
I'll rush into the battle ; strive to part
The king and Varus ; cast myself before
My husband's feet, and yield him up my life.

I fled this morning from that dreadful vengeance
Which now I search for : banish'd by his crimes,
His danger has recall'd me : honour bids,
And I obey : I go to save his life
Who thirsts for mine.

N A B A L.

Alas ! to what extremes —

M A R I A M N E.

I'm lost : 'tis Herod.

S C E N E V.

HEROD, MARIAMNE, ELIZA, NABAL,

IDAMUS, GUARDS.

HEROD.

Did they see each other ?
Now, faithless wretch, thou dy'st.

M A R I A M N E.

Do not, my lord,
'Tis the last boon that I shall crave ; O do not —

HEROD.

Begone — guards, follow her.

[Guards carry off Mariamne.]

N A B A L.

Eternal justice !

S C E N E

S C E N E VI.

HEROD, IDAMUS, GUARDS.

HEROD.

Let me not hear her nam'd : perfidious woman !
Well, my brave foldiers, are there yet more foes ?

IDAMAS.

The Romans are subdued ; the Hebrews bend
Once more submissive to the yoke ; and Varus,
Cover'd with wounds, to thy victorious arm
Gives up the field : O thou haft gain'd this day
Eternal glory ; but the prætor's blood,
Shed by thy hand, will draw on thee the vengeance
Of proud offended Rome : a crime like this—

HEROD.

And now for my revenge on Mariamne.
Unworthy of my love I caft her from me,
And from this moment fhall begin to reign.
O ! I was blind, that fond destructive paſſion
Was Herod's only weaknefs : let her dye :
Let me forget her charms, and her remembrance.
Be blotted now for ever from my ſoul.
Are all things ready for the execution ?

IDAMAS.

They are, my lord.

HEROD.

HEROD.

How quickly they obey me !

Unhappy Herod ! must she perish then ?

Did'st thou say, Idamas, 'twas ready all ?

I D A M A S.

The guards have seiz'd her person, and too soon
Thy vengeance will be satisfied.

HEROD.

She courted

Her own destruction, and oblig'd me to it :

But she is gone : I'll think no more on't : Oh !

I cou'd have liv'd and dy'd with Mariamne :

To what hast thou compell'd me ?

S C E N E the last.

HEROD, IDAMAS, NABAL.

HEROD.

Nabal, ha !

Whither so fast ? just heaven ! and in tears !

How my soul shakes with dreadful apprehension.

NABAL:

My lord—

HEROD.

What woud'st thou say ?

NABAL

NABAL.

My feeble voice
Dies on my trembling lips.

HEROD.

O Mariamne !

NABAL.

Superfluous sorrow !

HEROD.

Ha ! 'tis past then, is it ?

NABAL.

She is no more.

HEROD.

Ha ! dead ! great God !

NABAL.

My lord,
Permit me, 'tis a debt I owe to thee,
Due to her mem'ry, to her virtues due,
To shew thee what a treasure thou hast lost,
The worth of that dear blood which thou hast shed :
Know, Herod, she was never faithless to thee ;
But, ev'n whilst Varus fought for her, refus'd
His offer'd hand, slighted his ardent vows,
And hazarded her life to succour thee.

HEROD.

What do I hear ? O wretched Herod ! Nabal,
What hast thou told me ?

NABAL.

N A B A L.

In that very moment,
Ev'n when her gen'rous heart inspir'd her last
And noblest act, thy cruel orders came,
And she was led to death : thy barb'rous sister
Urg'd on her fate.

H E R O D.

Inhuman Salome ;
Why did my justice spare that cruel monster ?
What punishments must be reserv'd for thee !
But let thy blood and mine—Nabal, go on,
And kill me with the melancholy tale.

N A B A L.

How shall I speak the rest ! the guard, thou know'st,
By thee directed, led her hence : she follow'd
Without a murmur or reproach of thee ;
Without affected pride, or real fear :
On her fair front sat graceful majesty,
Temper'd with softness ; modest innocence
And heart-felt virtue sparkled in her eyes ;
Her sorrows gave new lustre to her charms ;
Priests, Hebrews, all, with tears and shrieks besought
her :

The soldiers call'd for death, and wept the fate
Of Mariamne—and of Herod too ;

For

For deep, they cry'd aloud, wou'd be thy grief,
And horror and remorse attend thee ever.

HEROD.

How ev'ry word strikes to my heart !

NABAL.

She felt

For their distress, and as she pass'd along,
Spake comfort to them. To the fatal scaffold
At length she came ; there lifted up her hands,
Loaded with shameful chains, and thus she spake :
‘ Farewell, unhappy king ; Herod, farewell !
‘ Thy dying Mariamne weeps for thee,
‘ And thee alone ; may this be thy last act
‘ Of foul injustice ! may thy reign henceforth
‘ Be happy ! Take my people to thy care ;
‘ Protect my children ; love and cherish them ;
‘ And I shall dye content. She spake, and bent
Her beauteous body to the axe ; I saw,
And wept her fall.

HEROD.

Then Mariamne's dead ;
And Herod lives : thou dear, and honoured shade !
Ye poor remains of all that once was fair
And good, and virtuous, to the silent grave

Soon

Soon will I follow thee—Ye shall not stop me,
Perfidious subjects: from my murth'rous hand,
Why will ye wrest my sword? O Mariamne!
Come now, and be reveng'd: tear forth this heart
That bleeds for thee. I faint, I dye. [*He faints.*]

N A B A L.

His senses
Are lost; his grief o'er pow'rs him.

H E R O D.

What thick clouds
O'erspread my troubled soul! deep melancholy
Weighs down my senses; why am I abandon'd,
Left to my sorrows thus? No sister here;
No Mariamne! How you stand and weep
At distance from me! Dare you not approach me!
All Judah flies before her wretched king.
What have I done? why am I thus abhorr'd?
Who will relieve me? who will sooth my grief?
Fetch Mariamne to me.

N A B A L.

Mariamne,
My lord!

H E R O D.

Ay, bring her; for I know the sight
Of her will calm at once my agony:

When Mariamne's with me, my blest'd hours
 Are all serene, and life glides sweetly on :
 Me thinks her very name hath heal'd my woes,
 And lessen'd my affliction : let her come.

N A B A L.

My lord—

H E R O D.

I'll see her.

N A B A L.

Sir, have you forgot
 That Mariamne's dead ?

H E R O D.

What say'st thou ?

N A B A L.

Grief

Transports him ; his mind's hurt ; he's not himself.

H E R O D.

Ha ! Mariamne dead ! destructive reason,
 Why com'st thou now to tell me this sad truth ?
 Down with these hateful walls, this fatal palace,
 Stain'd with her blood, and let its ruins hide
 Th' accursed place where Mariamne perish'd !
 Is she then dead, and I her murderer !
 Punish this parricide, this horrid monster :
 Tear him in pieces you who weep her loss,
 My subjects ; and thou, heav'n, who hast her now,
 Send down thy vengeful light'nings, and destroy me.

END of the FIFTH and last ACT.



B R U T U S

A

T R A G E D Y.



K 2

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS tragedy was exhibited for the first time in 1730. It met with less success than any of our author's pieces in the representation, having been played only sixteen nights. It has notwithstanding been translated into more languages, and more admired by foreigners than most of his tragedies. The present edition of it differs greatly from the former.

A
D I S C O U R S E
 O N
T R A G E D Y :

In a LETTER to Lord BOLINGBROKE.

On rhyme. On the difficulty of French versification. Examples of it. Tragedies in prose. Rhime pleases the French even in comedy. Character of the English theatre. Faults of the French. The English Cato. Comparison of the Manlius of M. De la Fosse with the Venice preserv'd of Otway. Examen of Shakespear's Julius Cæsar. Horrible spectacles amongst the Greeks. The observation of decorum and the unities. Fifth act of Rodogune. The pomp and dignity of the tragic Scene. Advice of an excellent critic. On love.

My LORD.

I HAVE here dedicated a French work, represented at Paris, to an English patron ; not because there are not in my own country many men of

distinguish'd parts and judgment, to whom I might have paid that compliment ; but because the tragedy of Brutus is as it were a native of England. Your lordship may remember, that when I retir'd to Wandsworth with my friend, Mr. Fakener, that worthy and virtuous citizen, I employ'd my leisure hours at his house in writing the first act of this piece in English prose, pretty nearly the same as it now stands in French verse. I mention'd it to your lordship several times, and we were both equally surpriz'd that no *Englishman had ever treated this subject, which seems peculiarly adapted to your theatre. You encouraged me to pursue a plan which wou'd admit of such noble sentiments ; permit me therefore, my lord, to inscribe this work to your lordship, tho' not written in your own tongue ; to you, my lord,

* In the first editions of this tragedy, no notice was taken of Lee's Brutus ; but the fact roundly asserted, that no Englishman had ever treated this subject: in the edition, however, now before us, Mr. Voltaire, or somebody for him, has subjoin'd the following note:

' There is a Brutus by an author whose name is Lee, but it is a piece intirely unknown, and never play'd.'

Mr. V. must have had very little acquaintance with the English stage, not to know that 'l'auteur nommé 'Lee, the author whose name was Lee,' is one of our favorite dramatic writers ; and though wild and extravagant, was possess'd of fine abilities.

Spirat tragicum satis & feliciter audet.

His Lucius Junius Brutus, though inferior in conduct to Voltaire's, has many fine and masterly strokes in it.

Doctē

Docte sermones utriusque linguæ.

you, who are able to instruct me in French as well as English; you, who at least have taught me to give my own language that force and energy, which freedom of thought can alone inspire: for the vigorous sentiments of the heart pass insensibly into our expressions, and he who thinks nobly will always speak so.

I must own, my lord, on my return from England, where I had pass'd almost two years in the continual study of your language, I found myself at a loss when I set about a French tragedy. I was accusom'd almost to think in English, and perceiv'd that the French idioms did not present themselves to my imagination with that facility as they had formerly: it was like a rivulet, whose current had been turn'd another way; some time and pains were requisite to make it flow again in its proper channel. I began then to be convinc'd, that to succeed in any art, we must cultivate it all our lives.

What deterr'd me more than any thing from works of this kind, was the severe rules of our poetry, and the slavery of rhyme. I regretted that happy liberty which you enjoy of writing tragedy in blank verse;

of lengthning out, or shortning almost all your words ; of running one verse into another ; and, upon occasion, coining new expressions ; which are generally adopted, if they sound well, and are useful, and intelligible. An English poet, said I, is a freeman, who can subject his language to his genius ; whilst the Frenchman is a slave to rhyme, oblig'd sometimes to make four verses to express a sentiment, that an Englishman can give you in one. An Englishman says what he will ; a Frenchman only what he can. One runs along a large and open field, whilst the other walks in shackles, through a narrow and slippery road : but, in spite of all these reflections and complaints, we can never shake off the yoke of rhyme ; it is absolutely essential to French poetry. Our language will not admit of inversions ; nor our verses bear to be run one into another : our syllables can never produce a sensible harmony, by their long or short measures : our cæsura's, and a certain number of feet, wou'd not be sufficient to distinguish prose from verse ; rhyme is therefore indispensibly necessary : besides, that so many of our great masters, who have written in rhyme, such as Corneille, Racine, and Despreaux, have so accus-tom'd our ears to this kind of harmony, that we cou'd never bear any other ; and I once more therefore insist

insist upon it, that whoever can be absurd enough, to shake off a burthen which the great Corneille was oblig'd to carry, wou'd be look'd upon, and with great reason, not as a bold and enterprising genius, striking out into a new road, but as a weak and impotent writer, who had not strength to support himself in the old path.

Some have attempted to give us tragedies in prose; but it is a thing which, I believe, can never succeed. Those who already have much, are seldom contented with a little; and he will always be a very unwelcome guest to the public, who says, I come to lessen your pleasure. If, in the midst of Paul Veronese or Rubens's pictures, any one shou'd come and place his sketches with a pencil, wou'd he have any right to compare himself with those great artists? We are us'd at feasts to dancing and singing, wou'd it be enough on these occasions merely for us to walk and speak, only under the pretence that we walked and spoke well, and that it was more easy, and more natural?

It is most probable, that verse will always be made use of in tragedy, and rhyme in our own. It is even to this constraint of rhyme, and the extreme severity of our versification, that we are indebted for the most

excellent performances in our language. We require in our rhimes that they shou'd never prejudice the sentiment; that they shou'd never be trivial, nor labour'd; and are so rigorous as to expect the same purity, and the same exactness in verse, as in prose. We don't permit the least licence: we force our authors to carry all the chains without breaking one link, at the same time to appear entirely free, and never acknowledge any as poets who have not fulfill'd all these conditions.

Such are the reasons, why it is more easy to make a hundred verses in any other language, than four in French. The example of Abbè Regnier Desmarais, of the French academy, and also of the academy of La Crusca, is a sufficient proof of this. He translated Anacreon into Italian with great success; and yet his French verses, except a few of them, are but very indifferent. It was nearly the same with Menage. How many of our men of genius have made excellent Latin verses, and written others in their own language which were insupportable!

Many disputes have I had in England about our versification: what reproaches have I heard from the learned* Bishop of Rochester for this childish con-

* The celebrated Dr. Atterbury.

straint, which, he us'd to say, we ridiculously laid upon ourselves, out of mere wantonness and levity: but depend upon it, my lord, the more a stranger knows of our language, the sooner will he reconcile himself to that rhyme which is at first so formidable to him. It is not only necessary to our tragedies, but is even an ornament to our comedies themselves. A good thing in verse is more easily retain'd: the various pictures of human life will be always more striking in verse, (when a Frenchman says verse, he always means rhyme) and we have comedies in prose, by the celebrated Moliere, which we have been oblig'd to put into verse after his death, and which are never play'd but in their new drefs.

Not daring therefore, my lord, to hazard on the French theatre that kind of verse which is used in Italy and in England, I have endeavour'd at least to transplant into our scene some of the beauties of yours; at the same time I am sufficiently satisfy'd, that the English theatre is extremely defective. I have heard you say you have not one good tragedy; but to make you amends, in those wild pieces which you have, there are some admirable scenes. Hitherto there has been wanting, in all the tragic authors of your nation, that purity, that regular conduct, that decorum in the ac-
tion

tion and stile, and all those strokes of art which have establish'd the reputation of the French theatre since the time of the great Corneille: though, at the same time, it must be acknowledg'd, that your most irregular pieces have very great merit with regard to the action.

We have in France some tragedies in high repute, which are rather conversations than the representation of an event. An Italian author, in a letter on the theatres, writes thus to me: * ‘ Un critico del nostro Pastor Fido disse che quel componimento era un riassunto di bellissimi madrigali; credo, se vi vesse, che direbbe delle tragedie Francese che sono un riassunto di belle elegie, e sonuosi epitalami.’

I am afraid there is but too much truth in what my Italian friend says; our excessive delicacy obliges us frequently to put into narration, what we wou'd gladly have brought before the eyes of the spectator: but we are afraid to hazard on the scene new spectacles, before a people accusom'd to turn into ridicule every thing which they are not used to.

* ‘ i.e. A critic on our Pastor Fido says, that work is nothing but a collection of the most beautiful madrigals: I believe, if he was now living, he wou'd say of the French tragedies, that they were a collection of fine elegies, and sounding epithalamiums.’

The place where our comedies are acted, and the abuses which have crept into it, is another cause of that dryness which appears in some of our pieces. The benches on the stage, appropriated to the spectators, confine the scene, and make all action almost impracticable : and this is the reason why the decorations, so highly recommended by the ancients, are with us seldom well adapted to the piece : and above all, it prevents the actors from passing out of one apartment into the other in sight of the spectators ; as was the sensible practice of the Greeks and Romans, to preserve at once unity of place and probability.

How, for instance, cou'd we dare, on our theatre, to bring on the ghost of Pompey, or the genius of Brutus, amongst a croud of young fellows, who seldom look upon the most serious things but with a view to shew their wit by a *bon mot* on the occasion ? how could we produce before them the body of Marcus, and Cato, his father, crying out,

Who wou'd not be that youth ? what pity is it

That we can die but once to serve our country !

Why mourn you thus ? let not a private loss

Afflict your hearts : 'tis Rome requires our tears ;

The mistress of the world, the seat of empire,

The nurse of heroes, the delight of gods,

That humbled the proud tyrants of the earth

And

And fet the nations free. Rome is no more.

O liberty ! O virtue ! O my country !

This is what the late Mr. Addison took the liberty to do at London. This Cato was translated into Italian, and play'd in several parts of Italy : but if we were to hazard such a spectacle at Paris, you wou'd hear the parterre roaring out, and observe the women turning their heads away.

You can't imagine how far we carry this delicacy. The author of our tragedy of Manlius took his subject from the English piece, wrote by Otway, call'd, Venice preserv'd. The plot is taken from the history of the conspiracy of the marquis de Bedemar, written by the Abbé de St. Réal. Permit me to observe by the way, that this short piece of history is much superior both to Otway's piece, and our own Manlius. First, you may remark the prejudice that oblig'd the French author to disguise a known fact under Roman names, whilst the English writer made use of the real ones. The London theatre saw nothing ridiculous in a Spanish ambassador's being call'd Bedemar, or the conspirators Jaffier, Pierre, and Elliot: this alone in France wou'd have been sufficient to ruin the performance. But Otway assembles the conspirators; Renaud makes them all take their oaths; assigns to each

each of them his post ; appoints the hour to begin the massacre ; and every now and then casts an eye of diffidence and suspicion on Jaffier, whom he mistrusts. He makes a pathetic address to them all, which is translated word for word from St. Real : “ *Jamais repos si profonde ne preceda un trouble si grand,*” &c.

But what has the French author done? afraid to produce so many persons on the stage, he only relates by Renaud, under the name of Rutilus, an inconsiderable part of that speech which he tells us he had made to the conspirators. One may perceive by this circumstance alone, how superior the English scene is to the French, however faulty Otway's piece may be in every other respect.

With what pleasure have I seen at London your tragedy of Julius Cæsar, which for these hundred and fifty years past has been the delight of your nation ! not that I approve the barbarous irregularities which it abounds with : it only astonishes me, that there are not many more in a work written in an age of ignorance, by a man who did not even understand* Latin, and had no instructor but his own genius : and yet, amongst

* Mr. V. would find it difficult to prove that Shakespear did not understand Latin, and still more so to convince us that the age he lived in was an age of ignorance.

so many gross faults, with what rapture did I behold Brutus, holding in his hand a dagger, still wet with the blood of Cæsar, assemble the Roman people, and thus harangue them from the Tribunal :

‘ Romans, countrymen, and friends, if there be
 ‘ any in this assembly, any dear friend of Cæsar’s, to
 ‘ him I say that Brutus’s love to Cæsar was no less
 ‘ than his. If then that friend demand, why Brutus
 ‘ rose against Cæsar, this is my answer: Not that I
 ‘ lov’d Cæsar less, but that I lov’d Rome more. Had
 ‘ you rather Cæsar were living, and die all slaves;
 ‘ than that Cæsar were dead, to live all free-men?
 ‘ As Cæsar lov’d me, I weep for him; as he was for-
 ‘ tunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour
 ‘ him; but as he was ambitious, I slew him. Who’s
 ‘ here so base that wou’d be a bondman? if any, speak,
 ‘ for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that
 ‘ wou’d not be a Roman? if any, speak, for him have I
 ‘ offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his
 ‘ country? if any, speak, for him have I offended.

‘ *All.* None, Brutus, none.

‘ *Brutus.* Then none have I offended. Here
 ‘ comes his body, mourn’d by Mark Antony; who,
 ‘ though he had no hand in his death, shall receive
 ‘ the benefit of his dying, a place in the common-
 ‘ wealth;

‘ wealth; as which of you shall not. With this I depart, that as I slew my best lover for the good of Rome, I have the same dagger for myself, when it shall please my country to need my death.

‘ *All.* Live, Brutus, live.’

After this scene Antony comes to excite the compassion of those very Romans whom Brutus had just before inspir’d with his own rigour and barbarity. Antony, by an artful discourse, leads back as it were insensibly these haughty spirits, and when he sees them soften’d a little, shews them the body of Cæsar; and making use of the most pathetic figures of rhetoric, excites them to sedition and revenge. The French, perhaps, wou’d never suffer on their stage a chorus compos’d of Roman Artisans and Plebeians; wou’d never permit the bleeding body of Cæsar to be expos’d in public; or the people to be excited to rebellion by an harangue from the tribunal: custom alone, who is the queen of this world, can change the taste of nations, and make the objects of our aversion pleasing and agreeable.

The Greeks produc’d spectacles on the stage that appear not less shocking and absurd to us. Hippolitus, bruised with his fall, comes on to count his wounds, and make hideous lamentations. Philoctetes falls into

a trance, occasion'd by the violence of his pains, and the black blood flows from his wound. Oedipus, cover'd with blood that drops from the remaining part of his eyes, which he had been just tearing out, complains both of gods and men. We hear the shrieks of Clytemnæstra, murder'd by her own son; and Electra cries out from the stage, 'strike, spare her not, she 'did not spare our father.' Prometheus is fasten'd to a rock, by nails drove into his arms and stomach. The furies answer the bloody ghost of Clytemnæstraby horrid and inarticulate noises. In short, many of the Greek tragedies are fill'd with terror of this kind, that is to the last degree extravagant. The Greek tragedians, in other respects superior to the English, were certainly wrong in often mistaking horror for terror; and the disgusting and incredible for the tragic and the marvellous. The art was in its infancy at Athens in the time of Æschylus, as at London in the time of Shakespear: but amidst all the faults, both of the Greek and English poets, we find singular beauties, and the true pathetic; and if any of my countrymen, who have no other knowledge of the manners and tragedies of their neighbours, but what they get from translations and hear-says, condemn them without restriction: they are, in my opinion, like so many
blind

blind men, who shou'd assure us that a rose cou'd not have lively colours, because they felt the thorns at the end of their fingers: but if the Greeks and you have both pass'd the bounds of decorum, and the English more particularly abound in the frightful instead of the terrible, we, on the other hand, as overscrupulous as you have been rash, for fear of going too far, stop too short, and very often fail of reaching the tragic, for fear of going beyond it.

I am far from proposing, that the stage shou'd be a scene of blood-shed, as it is in Shakespear, and many of his successors, who, without his genius, have imitated his faults; but I dare believe, that there are some certain circumstances and situations, which at present appear shocking and disgusting to a French audience, that, if well conducted, represented with art, and above all soften'd by the charms of good verse, might give us a species of pleasure we are as yet unacquainted with, which notwithstanding may certainly be attain'd.

* Il n'est point de serpent ni de monstre odieux
Qui par l'art imité ne puisse plaire aux yeux.

* i. e. There is no serpent, or odious monster, but if well imitated by art, may be made agreeable to the eye.

The French lines are taken from Boileau's art of poetry.

At

At least I shou'd wish to be inform'd, why our Heroes and Heroines shou'd be permitted to kill themselves and nobody else : is the scene less bloody by the death of Athaliah, who stabs herself for her lover, than it wou'd be by the murder of Cæsar ? And if the sight of Cato's son, brought in dead before his father, gives that old Roman an opportunity of making an excellent speech on the occasion ; if this part of Cato was admir'd both in England and in Italy, even by the greatest partisans of French decorum ; if the most delicate of the fair sex were not in the least shock'd at it ; why may not the French bring themselves to it by use ? Is not nature the same in all mankind ?

All these laws of banishing murder from the stage ; of not suffering more than three persons to speak, &c. are such as, in my opinion, might admit of some exceptions amongst us, as they did amongst the Greeks. It is not with the rules of decorum, that are always a little arbitrary, as it is with the fundamental laws of the theatre, which are the three unities ; it would be a mark of weakness and sterility to extend an action beyond that degree of space and time which are suitable to it. Ask any man, who has crowd'd too many events into his piece, what is the reason of this fault, and, if he has sincerity enough, he will fairly confess, that
he

he had not a sufficient share of genius to fill up his performance with a single action: and if he takes up two days, and places his scene in two different places, you may take it for granted, it is because he has not skill enough to confine his plan within the limits of three hours, or bring it into the walls of a palace, as probability requires he shou'd. But it is quite another thing with regard to hazarding a horrible spectacle on the stage; this wou'd not in the least shock probability: a boldness like this, far from implying any weakness in the author, wou'd, on the contrary, demand a great genius to give his verses true granduer in an action, which, without sublimity of stile, wou'd appear savage and disgustful.

This was what our great Corneille once attempted in his *Rodogune*. He brings upon the stage a mother, who, in the presence of an ambassador and the whole court, wants to poison her son and her daughter-in-law, after having kill'd her other son with her own hand. She presents them the poison'd cup, and on their refusing to taste it, occasion'd by their suspicions of her, drinks it herself, and dies by the poison which she had design'd for them. Strokes so terrible as these shou'd be very rare; it is not every one who shou'd dare

dare to strike them. Such novelties require great circumspection, and a masterly hand in the execution. The English themselves allow that Shakespear, for example, was the only poet who cou'd call up ghosts, and make them speak with success.

Within that circle none durst move but he.

The more majestic and full of terror a theatrical action is, the more insipid wou'd it become, if it were often repeated: in the same manner as details of battles, which, being in their own nature every thing that is terrible, become dry and tedious, by appearing often in history. The only piece of Racine, where there is any spectacle, is his master-piece, *Athaliah*: there we see a child on the throne, his nurse and the priests attending him, a queen who commands her soldiers to massacre him, and the Levites running to take up arms in his defence: the whole of this action is pathetic; and yet, if the stile was not so too, it wou'd appear childish and ridiculous.

The more we strike the eye with splendid appearances, the stronger obligation do we lay ourselves under of supporting them by sublimity of diction; otherwise the writer will only be consider'd as a decorator, and not as a tragic poet. It is near thirty years since the tragedy of *Montezuma* was represented at Paris; the

scene

scene open'd with a spectacle intirely new : a palace in a magnificent but barbarous taste ; Montezuma in a dress very singular and uncommon ; at the end of the stage a number of his slaves, arm'd with bows and arrows according to the custom of their country ; round the king were eight grandees of his court prostrate on the earth, with their faces to the ground ; Montezuma begins the piece with these words :

Arise, your king permits you on this day
To look on, and to speak to him.

The spectacle charm'd the spectators, but nothing else gave the least pleasure throughout the whole tragedy.

With regard to myself I must own, it was not without fear that I introduc'd on our stage the Roman Senate in scarlet robes delivering their opinions. I recollected, that when I brought into my Oedipus a Chorus of Thebans, saying,

Strike, strike ye gods, O death deliver us,
And we will thank you for the boon——

The parterre, instead of being struck with the pathetic in this passage, only felt the absurdity, if any
such

such there were, of putting these verses into the mouth of raw actors, not much us'd to chorusses, and immediately set up a loud laugh. This prevented me from making the senators in Brutus speak, when Titus is accused before them, or heightening the terror of the incident by expressing the astonishment and grief of these reverend fathers of their country, who, no doubt, ought to have signify'd their surprise in another manner than by dumb shew : but they did not do even so much as this.

The English are more fond of action than we are, and speak more to the eye : the French give more attention to elegance, harmony, and the charms of verse. It is certainly more difficult to write well, than to bring upon the stage, assassinations, wheels, mechanical powers, ghosts, and forcerers. The tragedy of Cato, which reflects so much honour on Mr. Addison, your successor in the ministry, I have heard you say, owes its great reputation to its fine poetry ; that is to say, to just and noble sentiments express'd in harmonious verses. It is these detach'd beauties that support poetical performances, and hand them down to posterity. It is only a peculiar manner of saying common things ; it is the art of embellishing

by

by diction what all men think and feel that constitutes the true poet. There are no refin'd or strain'd sentiments, no romantic adventures in the fourth book of Virgil; all is natural; and yet it is the highest effort of human genius. Mr. Racine is only superior to all those who have said the same things as himself, because he has said them better: and Corneille is never truly great, but when he expresses himself as well as he thinks. Let us remember this precept of Despreaux's.

* * Et que tout ce qu'il dit, facile à retenir,

* De son ouvrage en vous laisse un long souvenir.

This is greatly wanting in many of our dramatic performances, which the art of an actor, or the figure and voice of an actress, have carry'd off with success on our stage. How many ill-written pieces have been acted oftener than Cinna and Britannicus! tho' nobody ever retain'd two lines of any of these poor pieces, and at the same time Britannicus and Cinna are got by heart. In vain did the Regulus of Pradon draw tears from the spectators by some moving incidents: the work itself, with all those that resemble it, are sunk in-

* i. e. * Let every thing he says be easy to retain, that it may leave with you a long remembrance of the work.
 For the French lines see Boileau's art of poetry.

to contempt, whilst the authors pay themselves a thousand compliments in their prefaces to them.

Some judicious criticks will perhaps ask me, why I brought love into the tragedy of Junius Brutus ; and why I have mingled that passion with the austere virtue of a Roman senate, and the political intrigues of an ambassador : our nation is reproach'd for enervating the scene by too much tenderness ; and the English, at east for this last age, have deserv'd the same censure ; or you have always follow'd a little our modes, and our vices : but will you permit me to give you my opinion on this head ?

To exact love in every tragedy shews an effeminate taste : and intirely to proscribe and banish it from the rheatre is equally unreasonable and ridiculous. The stage, either in tragedy or comedy, is a lively picture of the human passions : one perhaps represents the ambition of a prince, the other ridicules the vanity of a cit. Here you laugh at the coquetry and intrigues of a citizen's lady ; there you weep the unhappy passion of Phædra : love amuses you in a romance, or charms you in the Dido of Virgil. Love in a tragedy is not more essentially a fault, than it is in the Æneid. In short, it is never blameble, but when it is brought in unseasonably, or treated inartificially.

The

The Greeks seldom ventur'd to bring this passion on the stage of Athens ; first, because their tragedies generally turning on subjects of terror, the minds of the spectators were bias'd as it were in favour of that particular species ; and, secondly, because the women at that time led a much more retired life than ours do, and consequently the language of love, not being as it is now the subject of every conversation, the poets had less inducement to treat a passion, which it is most difficult to paint on account of that very delicate management which it requires. Another reason, which I own weighs greatly with me, was, that they had no actresses, the women's parts being always play'd by men in masks. Love from their mouths wou'd perhaps have appear'd ridiculous.

At London and Paris it is quite another thing: where it must be acknowledg'd the authors wou'd have very ill understood their own interests, and must have known little of their audience, to have made their Oldfield's, Duclos, and Lecouvreaux talk of nothing but ambition and politics.

But the misfortune is, that love, with our heroes of the theatre, is seldom any thing more than gallantry : and with you it sometimes degenerates into lewd-

ness and debauchery. In our Alcibiades, a piece greatly follow'd but poorly written, and therefore at present in very little esteem, we admir'd for a long time these bad verses, which were repeated in a soft and persuasive tone by the Æsopus of the last age.

Fir'd with a real passion, when I saw
The lovely fair, and falling at her feet,
In her soft eyes, that sparkled with desire,
Or with a timid lustre glanc'd upon me,
Beheld the mutual flame that in her breast
Responsive glow'd, what raptures fill'd my soul !
From those blest minutes only have I learn'd
That man may taste of perfect happiness.

In your Venice Preserv'd, old Renaut wants to debauch the wife of Jaffier; she complains of it in terms rather indecent, and goes so far as to say he came to her, unbutton'd.

To render love worthy of the tragic scene, it ought to arise naturally from the business of the piece, and not be brought in by mere force, only to fill up a vacancy, as it generally does in your tragedies, and in ours, which are both of them too long: it shou'd be a passion intirely tragical, consider'd as a weakness, and
oppos'd

oppos'd by remorse : it shou'd either lead to misfortunes or to crimes, to convince us how dangerous it is : or it shou'd be subdued by virtue, to shew us that it is not invincible. In all other cases, it is no more than the love of an eclogue, or a comedy.

You, my lord, must decide whether I have fulfill'd any of these conditions : but I hope that, above all, your friends will be so candid, as not to judge of the genius and taste of our nation by this discourse, or by the tragedy which I have sent you with it. I am, perhaps, one of those who cultivate the belles lettres in France with the least success, and if the sentiments which I have here submitted to your judgment are disapprov'd, I, and I only, deserve to be censur'd for them.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

JUNIUS BRUTUS,
VALERIUS PUBLICOLA. } Consuls.

TITUS, Son of Brutus,

TULLIA, Daughter of Tarquin.

ALGINA, Confidant of Tullia.

ARUNS, Ambassador from Porsenna.

MESSALA, Friend of Titus.

PROCLUS, A military Tribune.

ALBINUS, Confidant of Aruns.

Senators. Lictors.

SCENE ROME.

BRUTUS.

B R U T U S.

A

T R A G E D Y.

ACT I. SCENE I.

BRUTUS. The SENATE.

The scene represents part of the house appointed for the consuls on the Tarpeian mount: at a distance is seen the temple of the capitol. The senators are assembled between the temple and the house, before the altar of Mars: the two consuls, Brutus and Valerius Publicola preside: the senators ranged in a semi-circle; behind them the lictors with their fasces.

BRUTUS.

A T length, my noble friends, Rome's honour'd senate,
The scourge of tyrants, you who own no kings

L 4

But

But Numa's gods, your virtues, and your laws,
Our foe begins to know us : this proud Tuscan,
The fierce Porfenna, Tarquin's boasted friend,
Pleas'd to protect a tyrant like himself ;
He who o'er Tyber's banks hath spread his hosts,
And bore his head so loftily, now speaks
In lowlier terms, respects the senate's pow'r,
And dreads the sons of freedom and of Rome :
This day he comes, by his ambassador,
To treat of peace, and Aruns, sent by him,
Demands an audience : he attends ev'n now
Your orders in the temple : you'll determine
Or to refuse or to admit him to us.

VALERIUS PUBLICOLA.

Whate'er his errand be, let him be sent
Back to his king ; imperial Rome shou'd never
Treat with her foes till she has conquer'd them :
Thy valiant son, th' avenger of his country,
Has twice repuls'd Etruria's haughty monarch,
And much we owe to his victorious arm :
But this is not enough ; Rome, still besieg'd,
Sees with a jealous eye the tyrant's friends :
Let Tarquin yield to our decrees ; the laws
Doom'd him to exile ; let him leave the realm,
And purge the state of royal villainy ;

Perhaps

Perhaps we then may listen to his pray'rs.
But this new embassy, it seems, has caught
Your easy faith : can you not see that Tarquin,
Who cou'd not conquer, thinks he may deceive you.
I never lov'd these king's ambassadors,
The worst of foes beneath the mask of friendship ;
Who only bear an honourable title,
And come to cheat us with impunity ;
Arm'd with state-cunning, or elate with pride,
Commission'd to insult us, or betray.
Listen not, Rome, to their deluding tongues ;
Stranger to art, thy business is, to fight ;
Conquer the foes that murmur at thy glory,
Punish the pride of kings, or fall thyself ;
Such be thy treaties.

BRUTUS.

Rome already knows
How much I prize her safety and her freedom ;
The same my spirit, and the same my purpose,
I differ in opinion from Valerius ;
And must confess, this first great homage paid
The citizens of Rome, to me is grateful.
I wou'd accustom the despotic pow'r
Of princes on an easy level first
To treat with our renowned common-weal,

Till heav'n shall crown our arms with victory,
And make them subjects ; then, Publicola,
As such we'll use them : mean time, Aruns comes,
Doubtless to mark the state of Rome, to count
Her treasures, and observe her growing pow'r,
And therefore wou'd I have him be admitted ;
Wou'd have him know us fully : a king's slave
Shall look on men ; the novelty may please him :
Let him at leisure cast his eyes o'er Rome,
Let him behold her in your patriot breasts,
You are her best defence ; let him revere
The God who calls us hither ; let him see
The senate, hear and tremble.

VALERIUS PUBLICOLA.

I submit ;

[The senators rise and come forward to give their votes.]

The gen'ral voice is yours : Rome and her Brutus
Must be obey'd : for me, I disapprove it :
Licitors, attend, and introduce him to us :
Never may Rome repent of this !

[To Brutus.]

On thee

Our eyes are fix'd ; on Brutus, who first broke
Our chains ; let freedom use a father's voice,
And speak by thee.

SCENE

S C E N E II.

THE SENATE, ARUNS, ALBINUS, ATTENDANTS.

[Aruns enters, preceded by two lictors, with Albinus, his friend; he passes by the consuls and senate, salutes them, and sits down on a seat prepar'd for him towards the front of the stage.]

ARUNS.

With pleasure I behold

This great assembly, Rome's illustrious senate,
And her sage consuls, fam'd for truth and justice,
Which ne'er till now suffer'd reproach or blame :
I know your deeds, and I admire your virtues ;
Unlike the wild licentious multitude,
The vulgar croud, whom party rage or joins
Or disunites, who love and hate by turns,
They know not why, taught in one changeful hour
To boast or beg, to rail or to obey ;
Whose rashness ———

BRUTUS.

Stop, and learn with more respect
To treat the citizens of Rome ; for know,
It is the senate's glory and her praise
To represent that brave and virtuous people
Whom thou hast thus reviled : for ourselves,

Let

Let us not hear the voice of flattery ;
It is the poison of Etrurian courts,
But ne'er has tainted yet a Roman senate.
On with thy Message.

ARUNS.

Little doth the pride
Of Rome affect me ; but I own I feel
For her misfortunes, and wou'd plead her cause
With filial love : you see the gath'ring storm
Hangs o'er your heads, and threatens sure destruction :
In vain hath Titus strove to save his country ;
With pity I behold that noble youth,
Whose ardent courage labours to support
Expiring Rome, and make her fall more glorious :
His vict'ries cost you dear ; they thin your ramparts,
And weaken your small force : no longer then
Refuse a peace so needful to your safety.
The senate bears a father's love to Rome,
So does Porfenna to the hapless kings
Whom you oppress : but tell me, you who judge
Depending monarchs, you who thus determine
The rights of all mankind, was it not here,
Ev'n at these altars, at this capitol,
You call'd the gods to witness your allegiance,
And bound your faith to your acknowledg'd king,

To

To Tarquin? Say, what pow'r has broke the tie?
Who snatch'd the diadem from Tarquin's head?
Who can acquit you of your oaths?

BRUTUS.

Himself:

Talk not of ties dissolv'd by guilt, of gods
Whom he renounc'd, or rights which he has lost;
We paid him homage, bound ourselves by oath,
Oaths of obedience, not of slavery:
But since thou bid'st us call to our remembrance,
The senate making vows for Tarquin's health,
And kneeling at his feet, remember thou,
That on this sacred spot, this altar here,
Before the same attesting gods, that Tarquin
Swore to be just; such was the mutual bond
Of prince and people, and he gave us back
The oath we made, when he forgot his own:
Since to Rome's laws no more he pays obedience,
Rome is no longer subject to his pow'r,
And Tarquin is the rebel, not his people.

ARUNS.

But, grant it true, that pow'r unlimited,
And absolute dominion, had mislead
Th' unhappy monarch from the paths of duty,
Is there a man from human error free?

Is there a king without some human weakness ?
Or if there were, have you a right to punish,
You, who were born his subjects ; you, whose duty
Is to obey ? The son doth never arm
Against the fire, but with averted eyes
Laments his errors, and reveres him still :
And not less sacred are the rights of kings ;
They are our fathers, and the gods alone
Their judges : if in anger heav'n sometimes
Doth send them down, why wou'd you therefore call
For heavier chains, and judgments more severe ?
Why violate the laws you wou'd defend,
And only change your empire to destroy it ?

Taught by misfortune, best of monitors,
Tarquin henceforth, more worthy of his throne,
Will be more wise and just ; the legal bonds
Of king and people now may be confirm'd
By happiest union ; public liberty
Shall flourish then beneath the awful shade
Of regal pow'r.

BRUTUS.

Aruns, 'tis now too late :
Each nation has its laws, by nature giv'n,
Or chang'd by choice : Etruria, born to serve,
Hath ever been the slave of kings or priests ;

Loves

Loves to obey, and, happy in her chains,
Wou'd bind them on the necks of all mankind.
Greece boasts her freedom ; soft Ionia bends
Beneath a shameful bondage ; Rome had once
Her kings, but they were never absolute :
Her first great citizen was Romulus,
With him his people shar'd the weight of empire ;
Numa was govern'd by the laws he made ;
Rome fell at last indeed beneath herself,
When from Etruria she receiv'd her kings,
Or from Persenna ; tyranny and vice
From your corrupted courts flow'd in upon us.
Forgive us, gods, the crime of sparing Tarquin
So many years ! at length his murth'rous hands,
Dy'd with our blood, have broke the shameful chain
Of our long slav'ry, and the Roman people
Have through misfortune found the road to virtue :
Tarquin restores the rights by Tarquin lost,
And by his crimes has fix'd the public safety :
We've taught the Tuscans how to shake off tyrants,
And hope they'll profit by the fair example.

*[The consuls descend towards the altar,
and the senate rises.]*

O Mars, thou god of battles, and of Rome !
Thou who dost guard these sacred walls, and fight

For

For thy own people, on thy altar here
 Deign to accept our solemn oaths, for me
 And for the senate, for thy worthy sons :
 If in Rome's bosom there be found a traitor,
 Who weeps for banish'd kings, and seeks once more
 To be a slave, in torments shall he die ;
 His guilty ashes, scatter'd to the winds,
 Shall leave behind a more detested name,
 Ev'n than those tyrant kings which Rome abhors.

ARUNS.

[Stepping towards the altar.]

And on this altar, which you thus profane,
 I call that god to witness, in the name
 Of him whom you oppress, the injur'd Tarquin,
 And great Porfenna, his avenger, here
 I swear eternal war with you, O Romans !
 And your posterity—

[The senators are going off towards the capitol.]

A moment stop
 E'er you depart, O senators ! and hear
 What I have more to offer : Tarquin's daughter,
 Must she too fall a sacrifice to Rome ?
 With ignominious fetters will ye bind

Her

Her royal hands, to triumph o'er her father,
Whose treasures you detain? Ungen'rous victors!
As if the right of conquest gave them to you:
Where are his riches? was it for the spoil
You robb'd him of his throne? let Brutus speak,
And own the plunder.

BRUTUS.

Little do'st thou know
Of Rome, her manners, and her noble nature;
But learn, mistaken man, her great protectors,
The friends of truth and justice, are grown old
In honest poverty; above the pride
Of wealth, which they disdain; it is their boast
To conquer kings, who love such tinsel greatness.
Take back your gold, it is beneath our notice;
And for the hateful tyrant's hapless daughter,
Though I abhor the wretched race, yet know
The senate has consign'd her to my care:
She hath not tasted here the baneful cup
Of flattery, that sweet poison of a court,
Or view'd the pomp and dang'rous luxury
Of Tarquin's palace: little did her youth
Profit by them; but all that to her age
And sex was due, all her misfortunes claim'd,
She hath receiv'd: let her return this day

To Tarquin ; Brutus yields her back with joy :
Nought shou'd the tyrant have within these walls.
But Rome's fix'd hatred, and the wrath of heav'n:
You have a day to carry off your treasures,
That must suffice : mean time, the sacred rights
Of hospitality await thee here ;
Beneath my roof thou may'st remain in safety :
The senate thus by me decrees : bear thou
Our answer to Porfenna, and then tell
Proud Tarquin, you have seen a Roman senate.

[Turning to the senators.]

Let us, my friends, adorn the capitol
With laurel wreaths, that round the brows of Titus
Have spread their noble shade ; the arrows too,
And bloody ensigns, his victorious hand
Hath wrested from the Tuscans : ever thus,
From age to age, may the successful race
Of Brutus still defend their much lov'd country ;
Thus, O ye gods, may you protect us ever ;
Guide the son's arm, and bless the father's councils !

S C E N E III.

ARUNS, ALBINUS.

*[Suppos'd to have retir'd from the hall of audience
into an apartment of Brutus's house.]*

ARUNS.

Didst thou observe the fierce unbending spirit
Of this proud senate, which believes itself
Invincible? and so perhaps it might be,
Were Rome at leisure to confirm her sons
In valour and in wisdom: liberty,
That liberty, my friend, which all adore,
And I admire, tho' I wou'd wrest it from them,
Inspires the heart of man with nobler courage
Than nature gives, and warmth almost divine.
Beneath the Tarquin's yoke, a slavish court
Enfeebled their corrupted hearts, and spoil'd
Their active valour; whilst their tyrant kings,
Busy'd in conqu'ring their own subjects, left
Our happier Tuscans in the arms of peace;
But if the senate shou'd awake their virtues,
If Rome is free, Italia soon must fall:
These lions, whom their keepers made so gentle,
Will find their strength again, and rush upon us;
Let us then stop this rapid stream of woes,
Ev'n at its source, and free a sinking world

From

From slav'ry ; let us bind these haughty Romans
 Ev'n with the chains which they wou'd throw on us,
 And all mankind. — But will Messala come,
 May I expect him here ? and will he dare —

ALBINUS.

My Lord, he will attend you ; ev'ry minute
 We look for him ; and Titus is our friend.

ARUNS.

Have you conferr'd ; may I depend on him ?

ALBINUS.

Messala, if I err not, means to change
 His own estate, rather than that of Rome ;
 As firm and fearless as if honour guided,
 And patriot love inspir'd him ; ever secret,
 And master of himself ; no passions move,
 No rage disturbs him ; in his height of zeal
 Calm and unruffled.

ARUNS.

Such he seem'd to me
 When first I saw him at the court of Tarquin ;
 His letters since—but, see, he comes.

SCENE. IV.

ARUNS, MESSALA, ALBINUS.

ARUNS.

Messala,

Thou gen'rous friend of an unhappy master,
 Will neither Tarquin's nor Porfenna's gold

Shake the firm faith of these rough senators ?
Will neither fear, nor hope, nor pleasure bend
Their stubborn hearts ? These fierce patrician chiefs,
That judge mankind, are they without or vice
Or passion ? is there aught that's mortal in them ?

MESSALA.

Their boasts are mighty, but their false pretence
To justice, and the fierce austerity
Of their proud hearts, are nothing but the thirst
Of empire ; their pride treads on diadems ;
Yet whilst they break one chain, they forge another.
These great avengers of our liberty,
Arm'd to defend it, are its worst oppressors :
Beneath the name of patrons they assume
The part of monarchs ; Rome but chang'd her fetters,
And for one king hath found a hundred tyrants.

ARUNS.

Is there amongst your citizens a man
Honest enough to hate such shameful bondage ?

MESSALA.

Few, very few, yet feel their miseries :
Their spirits, still elate with this new change,
Are mad with joy : the meanest wretch among them,
Because he help'd to pull down monarchy,
Assumes its pride, and thinks himself a king :

But

But I've already told you I have friends,
 Who with reluctance bend to this new yoke;
 Who look with scorn on a deluded people,
 And stem the torrent with unshaken firmness;
 Good men and true, whose hands and hearts were made
 To change the state of kingdoms, or destroy them.

A R U N S.

What may I hope from these brave Romans? say,
 Will they serve Tarquin?

M E S S A L A.

They'll do any thing;
 Their lives are thine; but think not, like blind vassals,
 They will obey a base ungrateful master:
 They boast no wild enthusiastic zeal,
 To fall the victims of despotic pow'r,
 Or madly rush on death to save a tyrant,
 Who will not know them. Tarquin promises
 Most nobly, but when he shall be their master,
 Perhaps he then may fear, perhaps forget them.
 I know the great too well: in their misfortunes
 No friends so warm; but in prosperity,
 Ungrateful oft, they change to bitt'rest foes:
 We are the servile tools of their ambition;
 When useless, thrown aside with proud disdain,
 Or broke without remorse when we grow dang'rous.

Our

Our friends expect conditions shall be made;
On certain terms you may depend upon them :
They only ask a brave and worthy leader
To please their fickle taste ; a man well known,
And well respected ; one who may have pow'r
To force the king to keep his plighted faith
If we succeed ; and if we fail, endued
With manly courage to avenge our cause.

ARUNS.

You wrote me word the haughty Titus—

MESSALA.

Titus

Is Rome's support, the son of Brutus ; yet—

ARUNS.

How does he brook the senate's base reward
For all his services ? he sav'd the city,
And merited the consulship, which they,
I find, refuse him.

MESSALA.

And he murmurs at it.

I know his proud and fiery soul is full
Of the base inj'ry : for his noble deeds,
Nought has he gain'd but a vain empty triumph ;
A fleeting shadow of unreal bliss :
I am no stranger to his throbbing heart,

And

And strength of passion ; in the paths of glory
 So lately enter'd, 'twere an easy task
 To turn his steps aside ; for fiery youth
 Is easily betray'd : and yet what bars
 To our design ! a consul, and a father ;
 His hate of kings ; Rome pleading for her safety ;
 The dread of shame, and all his triumphs past.
 But I have stole into his heart, and know
 The secret poison that enflames his soul :
 He sighs for Tullia.

ARUNS.

Ha ! for Tullia ?

MESSALA.

Yes :

Scarce cou'd I draw the secret from his breast ;
 He blush'd himself at the discovery,
 Asham'd to own his love ; for midst the tumult
 Of jarring passions, still his zeal prevails
 For liberty.

ARUNS.

Thus on a single heart,
 And its unequal movements, must depend,
 Spite of myself, the fate of Rome : but hence,
 Albinus, and prepare for Tarquin's tent.

[Turning to Messala.

We'll to the princess : I have gain'd some knowledge

By

By long experience, of the human heart :
I'll try to read her soul ; perhaps her hands
May weave a net to catch this Roman senate.

END of the FIRST ACT.

ACT II. SCENE I.

The scene represents an apartment in the palace of the consuls.

TITUS, MESSALA.

MESSALA.

No: 'tis unkind ; it hurts my tender friendship :
He who but half unveils his secrets, tells
Too little or too much : dost thou suspect me ?

TITUS.

Do not reproach me ; my whole heart is thine.

MESSALA.

Thou who so lately didst with me detest
The rig'rous senate, and pour forth thy complaints
In anguish ; thou who on this faithful bosom
Didst shed so many tears, could'st thou conceal
Griefs far more bitter, the keen pangs of love ?

How cou'd ambition quench the rising flame,
And blot out ev'ry tender sentiment ?
Dost thou detest the hateful senate more
Than thou lov'st Tullia ?

TITUS.

O ! I love with transport,
And hate with fury ; ever in extreme ;
It is the native weakness of my soul,
Which much I strive to conquer, but in vain.

MESSALA.

But why thus rashly tear thy bleeding wounds ?
Why weep thy inj'ries, yet disguise thy love ?

TITUS.

Spite of those inj'ries, spite of all my wrongs,
Have I not shed my blood for this proud senate ?
Thou know'st I have, and didst partake my glory ;
With joy I told thee of my fair success ;
It shew'd, methought, a nobleness of soul
To fight for the ungrateful, and I felt
The pride of conscious virtue : the misfortunes
We have o'ercome with pleasure we impart,
But few are anxious to reveal their shame.

MESSALA.

Where is the shame, the folly, or disgrace ?

And

And what shou'd Titus blush at?

TITUS.

At myself:

At my fond foolish passion, that o'erpowrs
My duty.

MESSALA.

Are ambition then, and love,
Passions unworthy of a noble mind?

TITUS.

Ambition, love, resentment, all possess
The soul of Titus, and by turns enflame it:
These consul kings despise my youth; deny me
My valour's due reward, the price of blood
Shed in their cause: then, midst my sorrows, seize
All I hold dear, and snatch my Tullia from me.
Alas! I had no hope, and yet my heart
Grows jealous now: the fire, long pent within,
Bursts forth with inextinguishable rage.
I thought it had been o'er; she parted from me,
And I had almost gain'd the victory
O'er my rebellious passion: but my race
Of glory now is run, and heav'n has fixed
Its period here: Gods! that the son of Brutus,
The foe of kings, shou'd ever be the slave
Of Tarquin's race! nay, the ungrateful fair
Scorns to accept my conquer'd heart: I'm slighted;

Disdain'd on ev'ry side, and shame o'erwhelms me.

MESSALA.

May I with freedom speak to thee?

TITUS.

Thou may'st:

Thou know'st I ever have revered thy prudence;
Speak therefore, tell me all my faults, Messala.

MESSALA.

No: I approve thy love, and thy resentment:
Shall Titus authorise this tyrant senate,
These sons of arrogance? if thou must blush,
Blush for thy patience, Titus, not thy love.
Are these the poor rewards of all thy valour,
Thy constancy, and truth? a hopeless lover,
A weak and pow'rless citizen of Rome,
A poor state-victim, by the senate brav'd,
And scorn'd by Tullia: sure a heart like thine
Might find the means to be reveng'd on both.

TITUS.

Why wilt thou flatter my despairing soul?
Think'st thou I ever cou'd subdue her hate,
Or shake her virtue? 'tis impossible:
Thou see'st the fatal barriers to our love,
Which duty and our fathers place between us:

But

But must she go?

MESSALA..

This day, my lord.

TITUS.

Indeed!

But I will not complain : for heav'n is just
To her deservings ; she was born to reign.

MESSALA.

Heav'n had perhaps reserv'd a fairer empire
For beauteous Tullia, but for this proud senate,
But for this cruel war, nay but for Titus :
Forgive me, sir, you know th' inheritance
She might have claim'd ; her brother dead, the throne
Of Rome had been her portion — but I've gone
Too far — and yet, if with my life, O Titus,
I cou'd have serv'd thee, if my blood —

TITUS..

No more :

My duty calls, and that shall be obey'd :
Man may be free, if he resolves to be so :
I own, the dang'rous passion for a time
O'er pow'rd my reason ; but a soldier's heart
Braves ev'ry danger : love owes all his pow'r
To our own weakness.

M 3

MESSALA.

MESSALA.

The ambaffador
From Tufcany is here: this honour, fir —

TITUS.

O fatal honour! what wou'd he with me?
He comes to fnatch my Tullia from my fight;
Comes to complete the meafure of my woes.

S C E N E II.

TITUS, ARUNS.

ARUNS.

After my long and fruitleft toils to ferve
The ftate of Rome, and her ungrateful fenate,
Permit me here to pay the homage due
To gen'rous courage, and transcendent virtue;
Permit me to admire the gallant hero
Who fav'd his country on the brink of ruin:
Alas! thou haft deferv'd a faire rmeed,
A caufe more noble, and another foe;
Thy valour merited a better fate:
Kings wou'd rejoice, and fuch I know there are,
To truft their empire with an arm like thine,
Who wou'd not dread the virtues they admire,
Like jealous Rome and her proud fenate: O!
I cannot bear to fee the noble Titus

Serving

Serving these haughty Tyrants ; who, the more
You have oblig'd them, hate you more : to them
Your merit's a reproach ; mean vulgar souls,
Born to obey, they lift th' oppressive hand
Against their great deliv'rer, and usurp
Their sov'reign's rights ; from thee they shou'd receive
Those orders which they give.

TITUS.

I thank you, Sir,
For all your cares, your kind regard for Titus,
And guess the cause : your subtle policy
Wou'd wind me to your secret purposes,
And arm my rage against the common-weal ;
But think not to impose thus on my frankness ;
My heart is open, and abhors design :
The senate have misus'd me, and I hate 'em,
I ought to hate 'em ; but I'll serve 'em still :
When Rome engages in the common cause,
No private quarrels taint the patriot breast ;
Superior then to party strife, we rush
United on against the gen'ral foe :
Such are my thoughts, and such they ever will be ;
Thou knowst me now : or call it virtue in me,
Or call it partial fondness, what you please,
But, born a Roman, I will die for Rome,

And love this hard unjust suspicious senate,
More than the pomp and splendor of a court
Beneath a master, for I am the son
Of Brutus, and have grav'd upon my heart
The love of freedom, and the hate of kings.

ARUNS.

But does not Titus sooth his flatter'd heart
With fancy'd blifs, and visionary charms ?
I too my, lord, though born within the sway
Of regal pow'r, am fond of liberty ;
You languish for her, yet enjoy her not.
Is there on earth, with all your boasted freedom,
Aught more despotic than a common-weal ?
Your laws are tyrants ; and their barb'rous rigour
Deaf to the voice of merit, to applause,
To family, and fame, throws down distinction ;
The senate grind you, and the people scorn ;
You must affright 'em, or they will enslave you :
A citizen of Rome is ever jealous
Or insolent ; he is your equal still,
Or still your foe, because inferior to you :
He cannot bear the lustre of high fortune ;
Looks with an eye severe on ev'ry action ;
In all the service you have done him, sees
Nought but the inj'ry you have pow'r to do ;

And

And for the blood which you have shed for him,
You'll be repaid at last with——banishment.

A court, I own's a dang'rous element,
And has its storms, but not so frequent; smooth
Its current glides, its surface more serene:
That boasted native of another soil,
Fair liberty, here sheds her sweetest flow'rs:
A king can love, can recompense your service,
And mingles happiness with glory; there
Cherish'd beneath the shade of royal favor,
Long may'st thou flourish, only serve a master,
And be thyself the lord of all beside:
The vulgar, ever to their sov'reign's will
Obedient, still respect and honour those
Whom he protects, nay love his very faults:
We never tremble at a haughty senate,
Or her harsh laws: O! wou'd that, born as thou art,
To shine with equal lustre in a court
Or in a camp, thou wou'd'st but taste the charms
Of Tarquin's goodness! for he lov'd thee, Titus,
And wou'd have shar'd his fortunes with thee; then
Had the proud senate, prostrate at thy feet——

TITUS.

I've seen the court of Tarquin, and despise it:
I know I might have cring'd for his protection,

Been his first slave, and tyrannis'd beneath him ;
But, thanks to heav'n, I am not fall'n so low :
I wou'd be great, but not by meanness rise
To grandeur : no, it never was my fate
To serve : I'll conquer kings, do thou obey them.

ARUNS.

I must approve thy constancy ; but think,
My lord, how Tarquin, in thy infant years,
Guided thy tender youth : he oft remembers
The pleasing office, and but yesterday,
Lamenting his lost son, and sad misfortunes,
' Titus, said he, was once my best support,
' He lov'd us all, and he alone deserv'd
' My kingdom and my daughter.'

TITUS.

Ha ! his daughter !

Ye gods ! my Tullia ! O unhappy vows !

ARUNS.

Ev'n now I carry her to Tarquin ; him
Whom thou hast thus deserted, far from thee,
And from her country, soon must Tullia go ;
Liguria's king accepts of her in marriage :
Mean-time thou, Titus, must obey the senate,
Oppress her father, and destroy his kingdom :

And

And may these vaulted roofs, these tow'rs in flame,
And this proud capitol in ashes laid,
Like fun'ral torches, shine before your people,
To light the Roman senate to its grave,
Or serve to grace our happy Tullia's nuptials!

S C E N E III.

TITUS, MESSALA.

TITUS.

Messala, in what anguish hath he left me!
Wou'd Tarquin then have giv'n her to my arms!
O cruel fate! and might I thus—O no,
Deceitful minister! thou can'st to search
My foolish heart; alas! he saw too well,
Read in my eyes the dear destructive passion,
He knows my weakness, and returns to Tarquin
To smile at Titus, and insult his love:
And might I then have wedded her, possess'd
That lovely maid, and spent a life of bliss
Within her arms, had heav'n allotted me
So fair a fate! O I am doubly wretched.

MESSALA.

Thou might'st be happy; Aruns wou'd assist thee,
Trust me, he wou'd, and second thy warm wishes.

TITUS.

TITUS.

No : I must bid adieu to my fond hopes ;
Rome calls me to the capitol ; the people
Who rais'd triumphal arches to my glory,
And love me for my labours past, expect me,
To take with them th'inviolable oath,
The solemn pledge of sacred liberty.

MESSALA.

Go then, and serve your tyrants.

TITUS.

I will serve them ;

It is my duty, and I must fulfil it.

MESSALA.

And yet you sigh.

TITUS.

'Tis a hard victory.

MESSALA.

And bought too dearly.

TITUS.

Therefore 'tis more glorious.

Messala, do not leave me in affliction.

[Exit Titus.]

MESSALA.

I'll follow him, to sharpen his resentment,
And strike th'envenom'd dagger to his heart.

SCENE

S C E N E IV.

BRUTUS, MESSALA.

BRUTUS.

Messala, stop; I'd speak with you.

MESSALA.

With me?

BRUTUS.

With you. A deadly poison-late hath spread
Its secret venom o'er my house: my son,
Tiberius, is with jealous rage inflam'd
Against his brother; it appears too plain;
Whilst Titus burns with most unjust resentment
Against the senate: the ambassador,
That wily Tuscan, has observ'd their weakness,
And doubtless profits by it: he has talk'd
To both: I dread the tongues of subtil statesmen,
Grown old in the chican'ry of a court:
To-morrow he returns: a day's too much
To give a traitor, and oft times is fatal:
Go thou, Messala, tell him he must hence
This day: I'll have it so.

MESSALA.

'Tis prudent, Sir,

And I obey you.

B R U T U S.

BRUTUS.

But this is not all :

My son, the noble Titus, loves thee well ;
 I know the pow'r that sacred friendship hath
 O'er minds like his ; a stranger to distrust
 Or diffidence, he yields his artless soul
 To thy experience ; and the more his heart
 Relies on thee, the more may I expect,
 That, able as thou art to guide his steps,
 Thou wilt not turn them from the paths of virtue,
 Or take advantage of his easy youth
 To taint his guiltless heart with fond ambition.

MESSALA.

That was ev'n now the subject of our converse ;
 He strives to imitate his godlike sire ;
 Rome's safety is the object of his care :
 Blindly he loves his country, and his father.

BRUTUS.

And so he ought ; but above all, the laws ;
 To them he shou'd be still a faithful slave ;
 Who breaks the laws, can never love his country.

MESSALA.

We know his patriot zeal, and both have seen it.

BRUTUS.

He did his duty.

MESSALA.

MESSALA.

Rome had done her's too,
If she had honour'd more so good a son.

BRUTUS.

Messala, no : it suited not his age
To take the consulship ; he had not ev'n
The voice of Brutus : trust me, the success
Of his ambition wou'd have soon corrupted
His noble mind, and the rewards of virtue
Had then become hereditary : soon
Shou'd we have seen the base unworthy son
Of a brave father claim superior rank,
Unmerited, in sloth and luxury,
As our last Tarquin but too plainly prov'd.

How very seldom they deserve a crown
Who're born to wear it ! O ! preserve us, heav'n,
From such destructive vile abuse of pow'r,
The nurse of folly, and the grave of virtue !

If thou indeed dost love my son, (and much
I hope thou dost) shew him a fairer path
To glory ; root out from his heart the pride
Of false ambition : he who serves the state
Is amply recompens'd : the son of Brutus
Shou'd shine a bright example to the world

Of ev'ry virtue : he is Rome's support,
 As such I look upon him ; and the more
 He has already done to serve his country,
 The more I shall require of him hereafter.
 Know then by what I wish the love I bear him,
 Temper the heat of youth ; to flatter Titus
 Were death to him, and injury to Rome.

MESSALA.

My Lord, I am content to follow Titus,
 To imitate his valour, not instruct him :
 I have but little influence o'er your son ;
 But, if he deigns to listen to my counsels,
 Rome soon will see how much he loves her glory.

BRUTUS.

Go then, be careful not to sooth his errors ;
 For I hate tyrants much, but flatt'ers more.

[Exit Brutus.]

SCENE V.

MESSALA alone.

There's not a tyrant more detestable,
 More cruel than thy own relentless soul ;
 But I shall tread perhaps beneath my feet
 The pride of all thy false insulting virtue :

Yes,

Yes, thou Colossus, rais'd thus high above us
By a vile croud, the thunder is prepar'd,
Soon shall it fall, and crush thee into ruin.

END of the SECOND ACT.

ACT III. SCENE I.

ARUNS, ALBINUS, MESSALA.

ARUNS. *[A letter in his hand.]*

AT length, my friend, a dawn of fair success
Breaks in upon us; thou hast serv'd me nobly,
And all is well: this letter, my Albinus,
Decides the fate of Tarquin, and of Rome.
But, tell me, have you fix'd th' important hour?
Have you watch'd closely the Quirinal gate?
If our conspirators to night should fail
To yield the ramparts up, will your assault
Be ready? Is the king well satisfy'd,
Think'st thou, Albinus, we shall bring him back
To Rome subjected, or to Rome in blood?

ALBINUS.

My Lord, by midnight all will be prepar'd;

Tarquin

Tarquin already reaps the promis'd harvest;
From you, once more, receives the diadem,
And owns himself indebted more to Aruns
Than to Porfenna.

ARUNS.

Or the envious gods,
Foes to our hapless sov'reign, must destroy
Our fair design, well worthy of their aid;
Or by to-morrow's dawn rebellious Rome
Shall own a master; Rome perhaps in ashes,
Or bathing in her blood. But better is it
A king shou'd rule o'er an unhappy people,
Who are obedient, than in plenty's lap,
O'er a proud nation, who are still perverse
And obstinate, because they are too happy.
Albinus, I attend the Princess here
In secret — Stay, Messala.

SCENE. II.

ARUNS, MESSALA.

ARUNS.

Touching Titus,
What hast thou done? cou'dst thou prevail on him
To serve the cause of Tarquin? cou'dst thou bind
His haughty soul?

MESSALA.

MESSALA.

No: I presum'd too far;

He is inflexible: he loves his country,
And has too much of Brutus in him; murmurs
Against the senate, but still dotes on Tullia:
Pride and ambition, love and jealousy,
Open'd, I thought, a passage to his soul,
And gave my arts some promise of success;
But, strange infatuation! liberty
Prevail'd o'er all: his love is desperate,
Yet Rome is stronger ev'n than love: in vain
I strove, by slow degrees, t' efface the horror
Which Rome had taught his foolish heart to feel
Ev'n at the name of king; in vain oppos'd
His rooted prejudice; the very mention
Of Tarquin fir'd his soul; he would not hear me,
But broke off the discourse: I must have gone
Too far, had I persisted.

ARUNS.

Then, Messala,

There are no hopes of him.

MESSALA.

Much less reluctant

I found his brother; one of Brutus' sons,
At least is ours.

ARUNS.

ARUNS.

Already hast thou gain'd
Tiberius? by what lucky art, Messala ——

MESSALA.

His own ambition did it all: long time,
With jealous eye, hath he beheld the honours
Heap'd on his brother, that eclipse his own;
The wreath of laurel, and the pomp of triumph,
The waving ensigns, with the people's love,
And Brutus' fondness, lavish'd all on Titus,
Like deepest inj'ries, sunk into his soul,
And help'd to fill the poison'd cup of ény;
Whilst Titus, void of malice or revenge,
Too much superior to be jealous of him,
Stretch'd forth his hand from his triumphal car,
As if he wish'd to give his brother part
Of all his glories: I embrac'd, with joy,
The lucky minute; pointed out the paths
Of glory; promis'd, in the name of Tarquin,
All the fair honours Rome cou'd give, the throne
Alone excepted: I perceiv'd him stagger,
And saw him bend, by slow degrees, before me:
He's yours, my Lord, and longs to speak with you.

ARUNS

ARUNS.

Will he deliver the Quirinal gate,
Messala?

MESSALA.

Titus is commander there,
And he alone can give it us : already
His virtues have been fatal to our purpose ;
He is the guardian deity of Rome :
Th' attack is dang'rous : without his support
Success were doubtful, with it all is certain.

ARUNS.

If he solicited the consulship,
'Think'st thou he wou'd refuse the sov'reign pow'r,
The sure reversion of a throne with Tullia?

MESSELA.

T'were an affront to his exalted virtue
To offer him a throne.

ARUNS.

And Tullia with it?

MESSALA.

O he adores her ; and ev'n loves her more,
Because he strives to hate ; detests the father,
And rages for the daughter ; dreads to speak,

Yet

Yet mourns in silence ; seeks her ev'ry where,
Yet shuns her presence, and drinks up his tears
In secret anguish : all the rage of love
Possesses him ; sometimes in storms like these
A lucky moment turns the wav'ring mind.
Titus, I know, is turbulent and bold ;
And, if we gain him, may, perhaps, go further
Ev'n than we wish : who knows but fierce ambition
May yet rekindle by the torch of love !
His heart wou'd glow with pleasure, to behold
The trembling senate prostrate at his feet.
Yet, let me not deceive you with the hopes,
That Titus ever will be ours ; once more,
However, I shall try his stubborn virtue.

ARUNS.

If still he loves, I shall depend on him :
One look of Tullia's, one sweet word from her,
Will soften his reluctant heart much more,
Than all the arts of Aruns or Messala :
For, O, believe me, we must hope for nought
From men, but thro' their weakness and their follies
Titus and Tullia must promote our cause ;
The one's ambition, and the other's love :
These, these, my friend, are the conspirators

That best will serve the king : from them I hope
Much more than from myself.

[Exit Messala.

S C E N E III.

TULLIA, ARUNS, ALGINA.

ARUNS.

This letter, Madam,

With orders to deliver it to your hands,
I have receiv'd from Tarquin.

TULLIA.

Gracious heav'n !

Preserve my father, and reverse his fate !

[She reads.

‘ The throne of Rome may from its ashes rise,
‘ And he who was the conqu’ror of his king
‘ Be his restorer : Titus is a hero,
‘ He must defend that scepter which I wish
‘ To share with him. Remember, O my Tullia,
‘ That Tarquin gave thee life ; remember too,
‘ My fate depends on thee ; thou may’st refuse
‘ Liguria’s king : if Titus be thy choice,
‘ He’s mine ; receive him for thy husband.’

Ha !

Read I aright ? Titus ! impossible !

Cou’d

Cou'd Tarquin, cou'd my father, still unmov'd
 In all his sorrows, thus at last relent?
 How cou'd he know, or whence —

[Turning to Messala.

Alas, my lord,

'Tis but to search the secrets of my heart
 You try me thus : pity a wretched princefs,
 Nor spread your snares for helpless youth like mine.

ARUNS.

Madam, I only mean t'obey your father,
 And serve his honour'd daughter ; for your secrets,
 In me it were presumption to remove
 The sacred veil which you have drawn before them;
 My duty only bids me say, that heav'n
 By you determines to restore our empire.

TULLIA.

And is it possible, that Tullia thus
 Shou'd be the friend of Tarquin, and the wife
 Of Titus?

ARUNS.

Doubt it not : that noble hero
 Already burns to serve the royal race :
 His gen'rous heart abhors the savage fierceness
 Of this new common-weal ; his pride was hurt
 By their refusal of his just demand :

The work's half done, and thou must finish it.
I have not look'd into his heart; but sure,
If he knows Tullia well, he must adore her:
Who cou'd behold, unmov'd, a diadem
By thee presented, and with thee adorn'd?
Speak to him then, for thou alone hast pow'r
To triumph o'er this enemy of kings:
No longer let the senate boast of Titus,
Their best support, the guardian god of Rome;
But be it Tullia's glory to possess
The great defender of her father's cause,
And crush his foes to ruin.

S C E N E IV.

TULLIA, ALGINA.

TULLIA.

Gracious heav'n!

How much I owe to thy propitious goodness!
My tears have mov'd thee: all is chang'd; and now
Thy justice, smiling on my passion, gives
New strength and freedom to the glorious flame.
Fly, my Algina, bring him hither: gods!
Does he avoid me still, or knows he not
His happiness? But stay, perhaps my hopes
Are but delusions all: does Titus hate

The senate thus ? alas ! and must I owe
That to resentment which is due to love ?

ALGINA.

I know the senate have offended him ;
That he's ambitious ; that he burns for Tullia.

TULLIA.

Then he'll do all to serve me : fly, Algina,
Away, begone. [Exit Algina.]

And yet this sudden change
Alarms me : O ! what anguish racks my heart !
Now, love, do thou assist and guide my virtue !
My fame, my duty, reason, all command it.
And shall my father owe his crown to me,
Shall Tullia be the chain to bind their friendship ;
And all Rome's happiness depend on mine ?
O, when shall I impart to thee, my Titus,
The wond'rous change we little thought to see,
When shall I hear thy vows, and give thee mine,
Without a pain, a sorrow, or a fear ?
My woes are past ; now, Rome, I can forgive thee ;
If Titus leaves thee, Rome, thou art a slave :
If he is mine, proud senate, thou'rt no more :
He loves me ; tremble therefore, and obey.

SCENE

S C E N E V.

TITUS, TULLIA.

TITUS.

May I believe it? wilt thou deign once more
To look on this abhorred Roman, long
The object of thy hatred, and thy foe?

TULLIA.

The face of things, my lord, is strangely alter'd;
Fate now permits me—but first tell me, Titus,
Has Tullia still an int'rest in thy heart?

TITUS.

Alas! thou can'st not doubt thy fatal pow'r;
Thou know'st my love, my guilt, and my despair;
And hold'st a cruel empire o'er a life
Which I detest; exhaust your rage upon me;
My fate is in your hands.

TULLIA.

Know, mine depends
On thee.

TITUS.

On Titus? never can this trembling heart
Believe it: am I then no longer hated?
Speak on, my Tullia: O, what flatt'ring hope
Thus in a moment lifts me to the height
Of mortal bliss?

N 2

TULLIA.

TULLIA.

[Giving him the letter.]

Read this, and make thy self,

Thy Tullia, and her father happy——Now
 May I not hope——but wherefore that stern brow
 And frowning aspect? gods!

TITUS.

Of all mankind

Titus is sure the most accurs'd : blind fate,
 Bent on my ruin, shew'd me happiness,
 Then snatch'd it from me : to complete my woes,
 It doom'd me to adore, and to destroy thee :
 I love thee, and have lost thee now for ever.

TULLIA.

How, Titus!

TITUS.

Yes; this fatal hour condemns me
 To shame and horror : to betray or Rome
 Or Tullia : all that's left to my sad choice
 Is guilt, or misery.

TULLIA.

What say'st thou, Titus?

When with this hand I offer thee a throne ;
 Now when thou know'st my heart, for no longer
 Will I conceal my virtuous passion for thee ;

When

When duty yields a sanction to our love ;
 Alas ! I thought this happy day wou'd prove
 The fairest of my life, and yet the moment
 When first my fearful heart, without a blush,
 Might own its passion, is the first that calls
 For my repentance. Dar'st thou talk to me
 Of guilt and misery ? Know, thus to serve
 Ungrateful men against their lawful prince,
 To scorn my proffer'd bounties, and oppress me,
 These are my mis'ries, Titus, these thy crimes.
 Mistaken youth, weigh in the even ballance
 What Rome refused, and what she offers thee :
 Or deal forth laws, or meanly stoop to obey them :
 Be govern'd by a rabble, or a king ;
 By Rome, or me : direct him right, ye gods !

TITUS.

[Giving her back the letter.]

My choice is made.

TULLIA.

And fear'st thou to avow it ?
 Be bold, and speak at once ; deserve my pardon,
 Or merit my revenge : what's thy resolve ?

TITUS.

'Tis to be worthy of thee, of myself,
 And of my country ; to be just, and faithful ;

'Tis to adore and imitate thy virtues ;
It is to lose, O Tullia, yet deserve thee.

TULLIA.

For ever then ——

TITUS.

Forgive me, dearest Tullia ;
Pity my weakness, and forget my love :
Pity a heart foe to itself, a heart
A thousand times more wretched now than ev'n
When thou did'st hate me : O ! I cannot leave,
I cannot follow thee ; I cannot live
Or with thee or without thee ; but will die
Rather than see thee given to another.

TULLIA.

My heart's still thine, and I forgive thee, Titus.

TITUS.

If thou dost love me, Tullia, be a Roman ;
Be more than queen, and love the common-weal :
Bring with thee patriot zeal, the love of Rome,
And of her sacred laws, be that thy dowry :
Henceforth let Brutus be thy father, Rome
Thy mother, and her lov'd avenger, Titus,
Thy husband : thus shall Romans yield the palm
Of glory to a Tuscan maid, and owe

Their

Their freedom to the daughter of a king.

TULLIA.

And wou'st thou wish me to betray ——

TITUS.

My soul,

Urg'd to despair, hath lost itself: O no!
Treason is horrible in ev'ry shape,
And most unworthy of thee: well I know
A father's rights; his pow'r is absolute,
And must not be disputed: well I know
That Titus loves thee, that he is distracted.

TULLIA.

Thou know'st what duty is, hear then the voice
Of Tullia's father.

TITUS.

And forget my own!

Forget my country!

TULLIA.

Can'st thou call it thine
Without thy Tullia?

TITUS.

We are foes by nature;
The laws have laid a cruel duty on us.

TULLIA.

Titus and Tullia foes! how cou'd that word
E'er pass thy lips!

N 4.

TITUS.

TITUS.

Thou know'st my heart belies them.

TULLIA.

Dare then to serve, and if thou lov'st, revenge me.

S C E N E VI.

BRUTUS, ARUNS, TITUS, TULLIA, MESSALA,
ALBINUS, PROCULUS, LICTORS.

BRUTUS.

[Addressing himself to Tullia.]

Madam, the time is come for your departure ;
Whilst public tumults shook the common-weal,
And the wild tempest howl'd around us, Rome
Cou'd not restore you to your household gods :
Tarquin himself, in that disastrous hour,
Too busy in the ruin of his people
To think on Tullia, ne'er demanded thee.
Forgive me if I call thus to remembrance
Thy sorrows past : I robb'd thee of a father,
And meet it is I prove a father to thee :
Go, princess, and may justice ever guard
The throne which heav'n hath call'd thee to possess !
If thou dost hope obedience from thy subjects,
Obey the laws, and tremble for thyself,
When thou consid'rest all a sov'reign's duty :

And

And if the fatal pow'rs of flatt'ry e'er
Shou'd from thy heart unloose the sacred bonds
Of justice, think on Rome ; remember Tarquin :
Let his example be th' instructive lesson
To future kings, and make the world more happy.

Aruns, the senate gives her to thy care ;
A father and a husband at your hands
Expects her. Proculus attends you hence,
Far as the sacred gate.

TITUS.

[*apart.*

Despair, and horror !

I will not suffer it — permit me, Sir,

[*Advancing towards Aruns.*

Brutus and Tullia with their Attendants go out, leaving
Aruns and Messala.

Gods ! I shall die with grief and shame : but soft,
Aruns, I'd speak with you.

ARUNS.

My lord, the time
Is short ; I follow Brutus, and the princess ;
Remember, I can put off her departure
But for an hour, and after that, my lord,
'Twill be too late to talk with me ; within
We may confer on Tullia's fate, perhaps
On yours.

[*Exit.*

N 5

SCENE

S C E N E VII.

TITUS, MESSALA.

O cruel destiny ! to join

And then divide us ! Were we made, alas !

But to be foes ! My friend, I beg thee stop

The tide of grief and rage.

MESSALA.

I weep to see

So many virtues and so many charms

Rewarded thus : a heart like her's deserv'd

To have been thine, and thine alone.

TITUS.

O no !

Titus and Tullia ne'er shall be united.

MESSALA.

Wherefore, my Lord ? what idle scruples rise

To thwart your wishes ?

TITUS..

The ungen'rous laws

She has impos'd upon me : cruel maid !

Must I then serve the tyrants I had conquer'd,

Must I betray the people I had sav'd ?

Shall love, whose pow'r I had so long defy'd,

At last subdue me thus ? Shall I expose

My father to these proud despotic lords !

And

And such a father, such a fair example
To all mankind, the guardian of his country,
Whom long I follow'd in the paths of honour,
And might perhaps ev'n one day have excell'd;
Shall Titus fall from such exalted virtue
To infamy and vice? detested thought!

MESSALA.

Thou art a Roman, rise to nobler views,
And be a king; heav'n offers thee a throne:
Empire and love, and glory, and revenge
Await thee: this proud consul, this support
Of falling Rome, this idol of the people,
If fortune had not crown'd him with success,
If Titus had not conquer'd for his father,
Had been a Rebel: thou hast gain'd the name
Of conqueror, now assume a nobler title;
Now be thy country's friend, and give her peace:
Restore the happy days, when, blest with freedom,
Not unrestrain'd by pow'r, our ancestors
Weigh'd in the even scale, and balanc'd well
The prince's honours and the people's right:
Rome's hate of kings is not immortal; soon
Wou'd it be chang'd to love if Titus reign'd:
For monarchy, so oft admir'd, so oft
Detested by us, is the best or worst

Of human governments: a Tyrant king
Will make it dreadful, and a good, divine.

TITUS.

Messala, dost thou know me? Dost thou know
I hold thee for a traitor, and myself
Almost as guilty for conversing with thee.

MESSALA.

Know thou, the honour thou contemn'st shall soon
Be wrested from thee, and another hand
Perform thy office:

TITUS.

Ha! another! who?

MESSALA.

Thy brother.

TITUS.

Ay! my brother.

MESSALA.

He has giv'n

His faith to Tarquin.

TITUS.

Cou'd Tiberius e'er

Betray his country?

MESSALA.

He will serve his king,
And be a friend to Rome: in spite of thee,

Tarquin

Tarquin will give his daughter to the man
Who shall with warmest zeal defend her father.

TITUS.

Perfidious wretch ! thou hast misled my steps,
And left me hanging o'er the precipice ;
Left me the dreadful choice or to accuse
My brother, or partake his guilt ; but know,
Sooner thy blood —

MESSALA.

My life is in thy pow'r,
Take it this moment ; I deserve to die
For striving to oblige you : shed the blood
Of friend, of mistress, and of brother ; lay
The breathless victims all before the senate,
And for thy virtues ask the consulship :
Or let me hence, and tell 'em all I know,
Accuse my fellow-traitors, and myself
Begin the sacrifice.

TITUS.

Messala, stop,
Or dread my desperate rage.

S C E N E

S C E N E VIII.

TITUS, MESSALA, ALBINUS.

ALBINUS.

Th' ambassador

Wou'd see you now, my Lord; he's with the princefs.

TITUS.

Yes, I will fly to Tullia: O ye gods
 Of Rome, ye guardians of my much-lov'd country!
 Pierce this corrupted this ungrateful heart:
 Had Titus never lov'd, he had been virtuous:
 And must I fall a sacrifice to thee,
 Detested senate! let us hence.

*[Turning to Messala,**Thou seest,*

Messala, this proud capitol replete
 With monuments of Titus' faith.

MESSALA.

'Tis fill'd

By a proud senate.

TITUS.

Ay: I know it well:

But hark! I hear the voice of angry heav'n,
 It speaks to me in thunder, and cries, stop,
 Ungrateful Titus, thou betray'st thy country:

No,

No, Rome, no, Brutus, I am still thy son:
O'er Titus' head the sun of glory still
Hath shed his brightest rays; he never yet
Disgrac'd his noble blood: your victim, gods,
Is spotless yet; and if this fatal day
Shall doom me to involuntary crimes,
If I must yield to fate, let Titus die
Whilst he is innocent, and save his country.

END of the THIRD ACT.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

TITUS, ARUNS, MESSALA.

TITUS.

Urge me no more: I've heard too much already:
Shame and despair surround me, but begone,
I am resolv'd: go, leave me to my sorrows,
And to my virtue: reason pleads in vain,
But Tullia's tears are eloquent indeed:
One look from her will more unman my soul
Than all your tyrant's threats: but never more
Will I behold her; let her go: O heav'n!

ARUNS.

I staid but to oblige you, Sir, beyond
The time which you so earnestly requested,
And which we scarce cou'd gain.

TITUS.

TITUS.

Did I request it?

ARUNS.

You did, my lord, and I in secret hoped
A fairer fate wou'd crown your loves; but now
'Tis past; we must not think on't.

TITUS.

Cruel Aruns!

Thou hast beheld my shame, and my disgrace;
Thou hast seen Titus for a moment doubtful:
Thou artful witness of my folly, hence!
And tell thy royal masters all my weakness;
Tell the proud tyrants, that their conqueror,
The son of Brutus, wept before thy face;
But tell 'em too, that, spite of all my tears,
Spite of thy eloquence, and Tullia's charms,
I yet am free, a conqueror o'er myself:
That, still a Roman, I will never yield
To Tarquin's blood, but swear eternal war
Against the race of her whom I adore.

ARUNS.

Titus, I pity and excuse thy grief;
And, far from wishing to oppress thy heart
With added sorrows, mix my sighs with thine;

Only

Only remember, thou hast kill'd thy Tullia.
Farewell, my lord.

MESSALA.

O heav'n !

SCENE II.

TITUS, MESSALA.

TITUS.

She must not go :
On peril of my life I'll keep her here.

MESSALA.

You wou'd not ——

TITUS.

No : Ill not betray my country :
Rome may divide her from me, but she ne'er
Can disunite our fate ; I live, and breath
For Tullia only, and for her will die.
Messala, haste, have pity on my woes,
Gather our troops, assemble all our friends,
Spite of the senate I will stop her ; say
She must remain a hostage here at Rome ;
I'll do't Messala.

MESSALA.

To what desp'rate means
Doth passion urge you ? What will it avail

To

To make this fond avowal of your love?

TITUS.

Go to the senate, and appeal to them,
Try if thou can'st not soften the proud hearts
Of these imperious kings. Messala, tell 'em
The interest of Brutus, of the state ——
Alas ! I rave, 'tis idle, and all in vain.

MESSALA.

I see you're hurt, my lord, and I will serve you.
I go ——

TITUS.

I'll see her : speak to her, Messala,
She passes by this way, and I will take
My last farewell of her.

MESSALA,

You shall.

TITUS.

'Tis she.

Now I am lost indeed.

S C E N E III.

TITUS, MESSALA, TULLIA, ALGINA.

ALGINA.

Madam, they wait.

TULLIA.

TULLIA.

Pity my hard, my cruel fate, Algina ;
 This base ungrateful man still wounds my heart ;
 And Brutus, like a vengeful god, appears
 To torture us : love, fear and grief, at once
 Distract my soul : let us begone.

TITUS,

O no !

Stay, Tullia, deign at least——

TULLIA.

Barbarian, hence !

Think'st thou with soothing words ——

TITUS.

Alas ! my Tullia,

I only know in this disastrous hour
 What duty bids me do, not what I wou'd :
 Reason no longer holds her empire here,
 For thou hast torn her from me, and usurp'st
 The pow'r supreme o'er this distracted mind :
 Reign, tyrant, stretch thy cruel pow'r ; command
 Thy vassal ; bid thy Titus rush on guilt ;
 Dictate his crimes, and make him wretched : No ;
 Sooner than Titus shall betray his country,
 Give up his friends, his fellow citizens,

Those

Those whom his valour sav'd to fire and slaughter,
 Sooner than leave his father to the sword
 Of Tarquin, know, proud woman —

TULLIA.

Shield me, heav'n?

Thou plead'st the cause of nature, and her voice
 Is dear to me as to thyself: thou, Titus,
 Taught'st me long since to tremble for a father;
 Brutus is mine: our blood united flows:
 Can'st thou require a fairer pledge than love
 And truth have giv'n thee: if I stay with thee,
 I am his daughter, and his hostage here.
 Can'st thou yet doubt? think'st thou in secret Brutus
 Wou'd not rejoice to see thee on a throne?
 He hath not plac'd indeed a diadem
 On his own brows, but is he not a king
 Beneath another name? and one year's reign
 Perhaps may bring — but these are fruitless reasons.
 If thou no longer lov'st me — one word more,
 Farewell: I leave, and I adore thee, Titus:
 Thou weep'st, thou tremblest; yet a little time
 Is left for thee, speak, tell me, cruel man,
 What more can'st thou desire?

TITUS.

TITUS.

Thy hatred ; that

Alone remains to make me truly wretched.

TULLIA.

It is too much to bear thy causeless plaints ;
To hear thee talk of fancy'd injuries,
With idle dreams of visionary ties :
Take back thy love, take back thy faithless vows,
Worse than thy base refusal : I despise them.
Think not I mean to search in Italy
The fatal grandeur which I sacrific'd
To Titus' love, and in another's arms
Lament the weakness which I felt for thee ;
My fate's determin'd : learn, proud Roman, thou
Whose savage virtue rises but to oppress
A helpless woman, coward, when I ask
Thy aid, and only valiant to destroy me,
Fickle and wav'ring in thy faith, of me
Learn to fulfill thy vows ; thou shalt behold
A Woman, in thy eyes howe'er contemn'd,
Howe'er despis'd, unshaken in her purpose,
And by her firmness see how much she lov'd thee.
Titus, beneath these walls, the rev'rend seat
Of my great ancestors, which thou defend'st

Against

Against their rightful lord ; this fatal spot
 Where thou hast dar'd t'insult and to betray me ;
 Where first thy faithless vows deceiv'd me ; there,
 E'vn there, by all the gods who store up vengeance
 For perjur'd men, I swear to thee, O Titus,
 This arm, more just than thine, and more resolv'd,
 Shall punish soon my fond credulity,
 And wash out all my inj'ries in my blood :
 I go —

TITUS.

No, Tullia, hear and then condemn me ;
 You shall be satisfy'd ; I fly to please you,
 Yet shudder at it : I am still more wretched,
 Because my guilty soul has no excuse,
 No poor delusion left. I have not ev'n
 The joy of self-deceit to sooth my sorrows :
 No, thou hast conquer'd, not betray'd me, Tullia ;
 I loath the fatal passion which I feel,
 And rush on vice, yet know and honour virtue.
 Hate me, avoid me, leave a guilty wretch
 Who dies for love, yet hates himself for loving ;
 Nor fears to mix his future fate with thine,
 Mid'st crimes, and horrors, perjury, and death.

TULLIA.

You know too well your influence o'er my heart ;

Mock my fond passion, and insult my love ;
Yes, Titus, 'tis for thee alone I live,
For thee wou'd die : yet, spite of all my love,
And all my weakness, death were far more welcome
Than the reluctant hand of cruel Titus,
Who is asham'd to serve his royal master,
And blushes to accept a kingdom from me.
The dreadful hour of separation comes,
Think on it, Titus, and remember well
That Tullia loves, and offers thee a throne.
Th' ambassador expects me; fare thee well,
Delib'rate and determine : an hour hence
Again thou shalt behold me with my father :
When I return to these detested walls
Know, Titus, I'll return a queen, or perish.

TITUS.

Thou shalt not die : I go ——

TULLIA.

Stop, Titus, stop ;
If thou shoud'st follow me, thy life's in danger,
Thou'lt be suspected ; therefore stay : farewell ;
Resolve to be my murtherer, or my husband.

S C E N E

S C E N E IV.

TITUS alone.

O Tullia, thou hast conquer'd, Rome's enslav'd :
Return to rule o'er her, and o'er my life,
Devoted to thee : haste, I fly to crown thee,
Or perish in th' attempt : the worst of crimes
Were to abandon thee. Now, where's Messala ?
My headstrong passion hath at length worn out
His patient friendship ; mistress, Romans, friends,
All in one fatal day, hath Titus lost.

S C E N E V.

TITUS, MESSALA.

TITUS.

O my Messala, help me in my love,
And my revenge : away ; haste, follow me.

MESSALA.

Command, and I obey : my troops are ready
At the Quirinal mount to give us up
The gates, and all my gallant friends have sworn
T'acknowledge Titus as the rightful heir
Of Tarquin : lose no time ; propitious night
Already offers her kind shade to veil
Our great design.

TITUS

TITUS.

The hour approaches: Tullia
Will count each minute: Tarquin, after all,
Had my first oaths: away; the dye is cast.

[The lower part of the stage opens and discovers]

Brutus.

What do I see; my father!

S C E N E VI.

BRUTUS, TITUS, MESSALA, LICTORS.

BRUTUS.

Titus, haste,

Rome is in danger; thou art all our hope:
Secret instructions have been giv'n the senate
That Rome will be attack'd at dead of night,
And I have gain'd for my beloved Titus
The first command, in this extremity
Of public danger. Arm thyself, my son,
And fly, a second time, to save thy country;
Hazard thy life once more in the great cause
Of liberty; or victory or death
Must crown thy days, and I shall envy thee.

TITUS.

O heav'n!

U VOL. I.

O

BRUTUS.

BRUTUS.

My son !

TITUS.

To other hands commit
The senate's favors, and the fate of Rome.

MESSALA.

What strange disorder has possess'd his soul !

BRUTUS.

Dost thou refuse the proffer'd glory ?

TITUS.

I !

Shall I, my lord—

BRUTUS.

Ha ! doth thy heart still burn
With proud resentment of thy fancy'd wrongs ?
Is this a time, my son, for fond caprice ?
Can he who sav'd his country be unhappy ?
Immortal honour ! will not that suffice
Without the consulship ? The laws, thou know'st,
Refus'd it, Titus, to thy youth alone,
Not to thy merit : think no more of that :
Go ; I have plac'd thee in the post of honour ;
Let tyrants only feel thy indignation ;
Give Rome thy life ; ask nothing in return,

But

But be a hero ; be yet more, my son,
 A Roman : I am hast'ning to the end
 Of my short journey ; thy victorious hands
 Must close my eyes ; supported by thy virtues,
 My name shall never die ; I shall revive
 And live once more in Titus : but perhaps
 It is decreed that I must follow thee ;
 Old age is weak ; but I will see thee conquer,
 Or perish with thee, Rome's avenger still,
 Free, and without a master.

TITUS.

O Messala !

S C E N E VII.

BRUTUS, VALERIUS, TITUS, MESSALA.

VALERIUS.

My lord, let all retire.

BRUTUS.

Run, fly, my son—

[To Titus.]

VALERIUS.

Rome is betray'd.

BRUTUS.

What do I hear ?

VALERIUS.

There's treason ;

We're fold, my lord, the author's yet unknown ;

But Tarquin's name is eccho'd through our streets,
And worthless Romans talk of yielding to him.

BRUTUS.

Ha! wou'd the citizens of Rome be slaves!

VALERIUS.

Yes: the perfidious traitors fled from me;
I've sent in quest of them: much I suspect
Menas and Lælius, the base partizans
Of tyranny and kings, the secret foes
Of Rome, and ever glad to disunite
The senate and the people: if I err not,
Protected by Messala, who himself,
But for his friendship with the noble Titus,
I almost think, has join'd them.

BRUTUS.

We'll observe

Their steps with caution; more cannot be done:
The liberty and laws which we defend
Forbid that rigor which I fear is needful;
But to detain a Roman on suspicions,
Were to resemble those usurping tyrants
Whom we wou'd punish: let us to the people,
Awake the fearful, give the virtuous praise,
Astonish the perfidious; let the fathers

Of Rome and liberty revive the warmth
Of Roman courage: who will not be bold
When we appear? O rather give us death,
Ye gods! than slav'ry: let the senate follow.

S-C E N E VIII.

BRUTUS, VALERIUS, PROCULUS.

PROCULUS.

A slave, my lord, desires a private audience.

BRUTUS.

At this late hour of night!

PROCULUS.

He brings you news,
He says, of highest import.

BRUTUS.

Ha! perhaps
Rome's safety may depend on it: away:
[To Proculus.]

A moments loss might hazard all—go thou
And seek my son: let the Quirinal gate
Be his first care: and may the world confess,
When they behold his glorious deeds, the race
Of Brutus was decreed to conquer kings.

END of the FOURTH ACT.

A C T V. S C E N E I.

BRUTUS, SENATORS, PROCULUS, LICTORS,

VINDEK, a Slave.

BRUTUS.

A little more and Tarquin, arm'd with vengeance,
This night had rush'd upon us; Rome had fall'n,
And freedom sunk beneath the tyrant's pow'r:
This subtle statesman, this ambassador,
Had open'd wide the fatal precipice:
Wou'd you believe it, ev'n the sons of Rome
United to betray her: false Messala
Urg'd on their furious zeal, and sold his country
To this perfidious Aruns; but kind heav'n,
Still watchful o'er the fate of Rome, preserv'd us.

[Pointing to Vindex.]

This slave o'er heard it all; his faithful councils
Awak'd my fears, and fill'd my aged breast
With double vigour: I had seiz'd Messala,
And hop'd by tortures to have wrested from him
The names of his associates; but, behold,
Surrounded by my lictors, on a sudden
He from his bosom drew a poniard forth,
Design'd no doubt for other purposes,

And

And cry'd, if you wou'd know Messala's secrets,
Look for them here, within this bleeding breast;
He who has courage to conspire against you,
Can keep the council which he gives, and die:
Then, as tumultuously they gather'd round him,
Pierc'd his false heart, and like a Roman dy'd,
Tho' he had liv'd unworthy of the name.

Already Aruns was beyond the walls
Of Rome; our guards pursued him to the camp,
Stopp'd him with Tullia, and ~~Per~~ long will bring
The traitor here, when heav'n, I trust, will soon
Unravel all their dark and deadly purpose.

Valerius will detect 'em: but remember
Friends, Romans, countrymen, I charge you all,
When ye shall know the names of these vile slaves,
These parricides, nor pardon nor indulgence
Be shewn to friends, to brothers, nay to children;
Think on their crimes alone, preserve your faith,
For liberty and Rome demands their blood,
And he who pardons guilt like theirs, partakes it.

[To the slave.]

Thou, whose blind destiny and lowly birth
Made thee a slave, who shoud'st have been a Roman;
Thou, by whose gen'rous aid the senate lives,

And Rome is safe, receive that liberty
 Thou hast bestow'd ; henceforth let nobler thoughts
 Inspire thy soul ; be equal to my sons,
 The dread of tyrants, the delight of Rome.

But whence this tumult ? Hark !

PROCLUSUS.

Th' ambassador
 Is seiz'd my lord, and they have brought him hither.

BRUTUS.

How will he dare —

S C E N E II.

BRUTUS, SENATORS, ARUNS, LICTORS.

ARUNS.

How long, insulting Romans,
 Will you thus violate the sacred rights
 Of all mankind ? How long by faction led
 Thus in their ministers dishonour kings ?
 Your lictors have with insolence detain'd me :
 Is it my master you thus treat with scorn,
 Or Aruns ? Know, my rank respectable
 In ev'ry nation —

BRUTUS.

The more sacred that,
 More guilty thou : talk not of titles here.

ARUNS.

ARUNS.

A king's ambassador——

BRUTUS.

Thou art not one:

Thou art a traitor, with a noble name,
Embolden'd by impunity: for know
That, true ambassadors interpret laws,
But never break them; serve their king, but ne'er
Dishonour him; with them repos'd in safety
Lie the firm ties of faith t'wixt man and man;
And of their holy ministry the fruit
Is grateful peace: they are the sacred bonds
That knit the sov'reigns of the earth together;
And, as the friends of all, by all rever'd.

Ask thy own heart if thou art such; thou dar'st not:
But if thy master bade thee learn our laws,
Our virtues, and our treasures, we will teach thee
Now what Rome is, and what a Roman senate:
Will teach thee that this people still respects
The law of nations, which thou hast dishonour'd:
The only punishment inflicted on thee,
Shall be to see thy vile associates bleed,
And tell thy king their folly and their fate.
When thou return'st, be sure inform thy friends
Of Rome's resentment, and thy own disgrace:
Lictors, away with him.

O 5

SCENE

S C E N E I I I.

BRUTUS, VALERIUS, PROCULUS, SENATORS.

Well, my Valerius,
They're seiz'd, I hope, at least you know the traitors :
Ha ! wherefore is that melancholy gloom
Spread o'er thy face, presaging greater ills ?
Thou tremblest too.

VALERIUS.

Remember thou art Brutus,

BRUTUS.

Explain thyself.

VALERIUS.

I dare not speak it : take

[Gives him the tablets,

These tablets, read, and know the guilty.

BRUTUS.

Ha !

My eyes deceive me ; sure it cannot be !
O heavy hour ! and most unhappy father !
My son ! Tiberius ! pardon me, my friends,
Unlook'd for mis'ry ! Have you seiz'd the traitor ?

VALERIUS.

My lord, with two of the conspirators,
He stood on his defence, and rather chose

To

To die than yield himself a pris'ner : close
By them he fell all cover'd o'er with wounds :
But O ! there still remains a tale more dreadful
For thee, for Rome, and for us all.

BRUTUS.

What is it ?

VALERIUS.

Once more, my lord, look on that fatal scroll
Which Proculus had wrested from Messala.

BRUTUS.

I tremble, but I will go on : ha ! Titus !

[He sinks into the arms of Proculus.]

VALERIUS.

Disarm'd I found him, wand'ring in despair
And horror, as if conscious of a crime
Which he abhorr'd.

BRUTUS.

Return, ye conscript fathers,
Strait to the senate ; Brutus hath no place
Amongst you now : go, pass your judgment on him ;
Exterminate the guilty race of Brutus ;
Punish the father in the blood of him
Who was my child : I shall not follow you,
Or to suspend or mitigate the wrath
Of injur'd Rome.

SCENE

S C E N E IV.

BRUTUS alone.

Great gods ! to your decrees
I yield submissive, to the great avengers
Of Rome, and of her laws : by you inspir'd
I rear'd the structure of fair liberty
On justice and on truth ; and will you now
O'erthrow it ? will you arm my children's hands
Gainst your own work ? Was it not woe enough
That fierce Tiberius, blind with furious zeal,
Shou'd serve the tyrant, and betray his country ?
But that my Titus too, the joy of Rome,
Who, full of honour, but this very day
Enjoy'd a triumph for his victories,
Crown'd in the capitol by Brutus' hand,
Titus, the hope of my declining years,
The darling of mankind, that Titus —— gods !

S C E N E V.

BRUTUS, VALERIUS, LICTORS, ATTENDANTS.

VALERIUS.

My lord, the senate have decreed, yourself
Shou'd pass the sentence on your guilty son.

BRUTUS.

Myself !

VALERIUS.

VALERIUS.

It must be so.

BRUTUS.

Touching the rest,

Say, what have they determin'd?

VALERIUS.

All condemn'd

To death; ev'n now perhaps they are no more.

BRUTUS.

And have the senate left to my disposal

The life of Titus?

VALERIUS.

They esteem this honour

Due to thy virtues.

BRUTUS.

O my country!

VALERIUS.

What

Must I return in answer to the senate?

BRUTUS.

That Brutus knows the value of a favor

He fought not, but shall study to deserve.

But cou'd my son without resistance yield?

Cou'd he —— forgive my doubts, but Titus ever

Was Rome's best guard, and still I feel I love him.

VALERIUS.

VALERIUS.

Tullia, my lord——

BRUTUS.

Well, what of her?

VALERIUS.

Confirm'd

Our just suspicions.

BRUTUS.

How!

VALERIUS.

Soon as she saw,

In her return, the dreadful preparation

Of torture for th' offenders, at our feet

She fell, and soon in agonies expir'd ;

'The last poor victim of the hated race

Of tyrants: doubtless 'twas for her, my lord,

Rome was betray'd : I feel a father's grief,

And weep for Brutus ; but in her last moments

This way she turn'd her eyes, and call'd on Titus.

BRUTUS.

Just gods!

VALERIUS.

Thou art his judge, perform thy office,

Or Strike, or spare ; acquit him, or condemn ;

Rome will approve what Brutus shall determine.

BRUTUS.

BRUTUS.

Lictors, bring Titus hither.

VALERIUS.

I retire,

And trust thy virtue ; my astonish'd soul

Admires and pities thee : I go to tell

The senate, nought can equal Brutus' grief

But Brutus' firmness.

S C E N E VI.

BRUTUS, PROCULUS.

BRUTUS.

No : the more I think,

The less can I believe my son cou'd e'er

Conspire with traitors to betray his country :

No : he lov'd Rome too well ; too well he lov'd

His father : sure we cannot thus forget

Our duty and ourselves in one short day :

I cannot think my son was guilty still.

PROCULUS.

'Twas all conducted by Messala ; he

Perhaps design'd to shelter his own crimes

Beneath the name of Titus ; his accusers

Envy his glory, and wou'd fain obscure it.

BRUTUS.

O ! wou'd to heav'n it were so !

PROCULUS.

PROCULUS.

He's thy son,

Thy only hope ; and innocent or guilty,

The senate has to thee resign'd his fate :

His life is safe whilst in the hands of Brutus ;

Thou wilt preserve a great man for his country ;

Thou art a father.

BRUTUS.

No : I am Rome's consul.

S C E N E VII.

BRUTUS, PROCULUS, TITUS at the further end of the
stage, guarded by Lictors.

PROCULUS.

He comes.

TITUS.

[advancing.]

'Tis Brutus : O distressful fight !

Open, thou earth, beneath my trembling steps !

My lord, permit a son ——

BRUTUS.

Rash boy, forbear :

I was the father of two children once,

And lov'd them both ; but one is lost : what say'st
thou ?

Speak, Titus, have I yet a son ?

TITUS.

O no :

Thou hast not,

BRUTUS.

BRUTUS.

Answer then thy judge, thou shame
To Brutus ; say, did'st thou betray thy country,
Give up thy father to a tyrant's pow'r,
And break thy solemn vows ? Did'st thou resolve
To do this, Titus ?

TITUS.

I resolv'd on nothing.
Fill'd with a deadly poison that possess'd
My frantic mind, I did not know myself,
Nor do I yet ; and my distemper'd soul,
In its wild rage, was for a moment guilty ;
That moment cloath'd me with eternal shame,
And made me false to what I lov'd, my country :
'Tis past ; and anguish and remorse succeed
T'avenge their wrongs, and scourge me for the crime.
Pronounce my sentence : Rome, that looks upon thee,
Wants an example, and demands my life :
By my deserved fate she may deter
Those of her sons, if any such there be,
Who might be tempted to a crime like mine.
In death at least thus shall I serve my country ;
Thus shall my blood, which never till this hour
Was stain'd with guilt, still flow for liberty.

BRUTUS.

BRUTUS.

Unnat'ral mixture ! perfidy and courage ;
Such horrid crimes with such exalted virtue !
With all thy dear-bought laurels on thy brow,
What pow'r malignant cou'd inspire thee thus
With vile inconstancy ?

TITUS.

The thirst of vengeance,
Ambition, hatred, madness ; all united —

BRUTUS.

Go on, unhappy youth.

TITUS.

One error more,
And worse than all the rest ; one cruel flame ;
That fir'd my guilt, and still perhaps augments it,
Completed my destruction : to confess it
Is double shame, to Rome of little service,
And most unworthy of us both : I own it :
But I have reach'd the summit of my guilt,
And of my sorrows too : end with my life
My crimes, and my despair, my shame and thine.

[Kneeling.

But if in battle I have ever trac'd

Thy

Thy glorious steps ; if I have follow'd thee,
And serv'd my country ; if remorse and anguish
Already have o'er paid my crimes ; O deign
Within thy arms once more to hold a wretch
Abandon'd and forlorn : O say, at least,
My son, thy father hates thee not : that word
Alone my fame and virtue shall restore,
And save my mem'ry from the brand of shame.
The world will say, when Titus dy'd, a look
From you reliev'd him from his load of grief,
And made him full amends for all his sorrows ;
Spite of his guilt, that still esteem'd by thee,
He bore thy blessing with him to the grave.

BRUTUS.

O Rome ! his pangs oppress me : O my country !
Proculus, see they lead my son to death.

Rise, wretched Titus, thou wert once the hope
Of my old age, my best support ; embrace
Thy father who condemn'd thee : 't was his duty.
Were he not Brutus, he had pardon'd thee ;
Believe my tears that trickle down thy cheeks
Whilst I am speaking to thee : O my Titus,
Let nobler courage than thy father shews

Support

Support thee in thy death ; my son, farewell :
Let no unmanly tears disgrace thy fall,
But be a Roman still, and let thy country,
That knows thy worth, admire while she destroys
thee.

TITUS.

Farewell : I go to death ; in that at least
Titus once more shall emulate his father.

S C E N E VIII.

BRUTUS, PROCULUS.

PROCULUS.

My lord, the senate, with sincerest grief,
And shudd'ring at the dreadful stroke —

BRUTUS.

No more :

Ye know not Brutus who condole with him
At such a time : Rome only is my care ;
I feel but for my country : we must guard
Against more danger : they're in arms again :
Away : let Rome in this disastrous hour
Supply the place of him whom I have lost
For her, and let me finish my sad days,
As Titus shou'd have done, in Rome's defence.

S C E N E

S C E N E the L A S T.

BRUTUS, PROCULUS, a SENATOR.

SENATOR.

My lord ———

BRUTUS.

My son is dead?

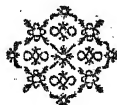
SENATOR.

'Tis so: these eyes—

BRUTUS.

Thank heav'n! Rome's free; and I am satisfy'd.

E N D of the F I R S T V O L U M E.





SÉMIRAMIS.

THE
DRAMATIC WORKS

OF

Mr. DE VOLTAIRE.

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M.DCC.LXI.

This VOLUME contains

DISSERTATION ON ANTIENT and MODERN
TRAGEDY.

EMIRAMIS. A Tragedy.

A LETTER from Signor ALGAROTTI to Signor
FRANCHINI, Envoy at *Florence*, on the Tragedy
of JULIUS CÆSAR.

THE DEATH of CÆSAR. A Tragedy.

PREFACE to the Tragedy of AMELIA; or, The
DUKE of FOIX.

AMELIA; or, The DUKE of FOIX. A Tragedy.

A
D I S S E R T A T I O N
On ANTIENT and MODERN
T R A G E D Y.

I N

A LETTER to Cardinal QUIRINI, a Noble
VENETIAN, Bishop of BRESCIA, and Keeper of
the VATICAN LIBRARY.

My LORD,

WELL did it become a genius like yours, and
one who presides over the most antient library
in the world, to give yourself intirely up to letters.
Such heads of our church we may expect to see under
a pontiff who instructed the christian world before he
was appointed to rule over it: but if literature in ge-
neral stands indebted to you, still greater are my own
obligations for the honor which you did me in translating
my *Henriade*, and the poem of Fontenoy, into such ele-

gant verse. The two virtuous heroes whom I celebrated are become yours. You have condescended to embellish my work, that you might render the names of Henry IV. and Lewis XV. still more illustrious, and spread a taste for the polite arts throughout all Europe.

Amongst the many obligations which we of later ages have to the Italians, and particularly to the Popes and their ministers, we must not pass over the cultivation and improvement of the Belles-Lettres, which have soften'd by degrees the gross and barbarous manners of our northern climates, and to which we are in a great measure indebted for our politeness, our happiness, and our glory.

Under the great Leo X. with Grecian eloquence revived also the Grecian theatre. The Sophonisba of the celebrated prelate Trifflino, the Pope's nuncio, was the first regular tragedy seen in Europe after so many ages of barbarism: in like manner as the Calandra of cardinal Bibiena had been before that time the first comedy in modern Italy: you were the first that built spacious theatres, and gave the world some idea of that splendor of antient Greece, which drew together so many foreign nations at its solemn festivals, and became the universal model of perfection in every art and science.

If your nation has not always equall'd the antients in tragedy, it is not to be attributed to your language, which is copious, flexible, and harmonious, adapted to all subjects : but it is in my opinion extremely probable, that the great progress you have made in music has in some measure put a stop to your improvement in tragedy : one perfection has destroy'd another.

Permit me then to enter into a literary discussion with your lordship, on this head. Some people, perhaps, who are used to the general stile of dedications, will be surpris'd to find me comparing Greek with modern customs, instead of comparing the great men of antiquity with those of your illustrious house : but I am talking to a man of letters, and a philosopher ; to one from whose knowledge I may receive improvement ; with whom I have the honour to be associated in the most antient academy in Europe, whose members often employ themselves in researches of this nature : I am speaking, in short, to one who had much rather give me instructions, than receive encomiums from me.

PART the FIRST.

*On the Imitation of the GREEK Tragedy in the ITALIAN
and FRENCH Operas.*

As One of your most celebrated authors tells us, that
 ages since the golden period in Athens, tragedy, de-
 and tserted and forsaken, wanders about from country to
 tion country in search of some kind friend, that will assist and
 have restore her to her former honours, but has as yet found
 ners none : if he means by this, that no nation amongst
 a gr the moderns has theatres where the chorusses are al-
 pine most always on the stage, singing strophes, antistro-
 U phes, and epodes, accompany'd with serious dances ;
 reviv that we do not set our actors upon stilts, or cover
 the their faces with masks that express joy on one
 side and grief on the other : if he means that the decla-
 mation of your tragedies is not noted and accompany'd
 with instruments, he is certainly in the right, and I
 don't know whether all this is not rather in our favor ;
 perhaps our manner, by approaching more nearly to
 nature, is full as eligible as that of the Greeks, which
 had much more splendor and magnificence.

But if he only design'd to insinuate, that this noble
 art is not in general so much consider'd since the re-
 storation

floration of letters as it was formerly ; that there are nations in Europe who have treated with ingratitude the successors of Sophocles and Euripides ; that our theatres are not like those superb edifices which the Athenians were so proud of ; and that we do not take the same pains as they did in representations, which are become so necessary in large and opulent cities ; we cannot but intirely agree with him.

Et sapit, & mecum facit, & Jove judicat æquo.

Where shall we find any public spectacle at present that can give us any idea of the Greek stage ? perhaps in your tragedies, or operas : what, say the critics, an Italian opera like the theatre of Athens ! yes, the Italian recitative is exactly the melopæa of the antients, a declamation in notes, and accompany'd with instruments of music : this melopæa, which is tiresome and disagreeable in your bad tragic operas, is admirable in those few which are good. The chorusses which you have added of late years approach still nearer to the antient chorus, as the music in them is different from that of the recitative ; in the same manner as the strophe, antistrophe, and epode, among the Greeks, were set to music, tho' they differ'd from the melopæa of the dialogue : add to this, that in many of the tragic

gan are bell Her spre A
operas of the famous Metastasio, the unities of place, time, and action, are observ'd; besides that, those pieces abound in that expressive poetry, and elegance of diction, which embellish nature without over-loading her; a happy talent, which none of the moderns have possess'd but Racine amongst us, and of all the English writers, Addison alone.

ages and tion hav ners a gr pine U
I am sufficiently aware, that these tragedies, which are so agreeable from the music, and magnificence of the spectacle, have indeed one fault which the Greeks always avoided; a fault which has often turn'd pieces finely written, and in all other respects extremely regular, into monstrous and unnatural productions; I mean, the fault of bringing into every scene little airs and catches that interrupt the action, merely to shew off the quavers of an effeminate voice, that exerts itself to the utter destruction of probability and good sense. The excellent author whom I just now mention'd, and who has taken several of his tragedies from French writers, has, by the force of genius, remedy'd in some measure this absurdity, which is become as it were necessary. The words of his airs or sonnets embellish the subject: they are full of pathos and passion, and sometimes not inferior to the finest odes of Horace; for a proof of which I shall beg leave to quote that very affecting
strophe

strophe sung by Arbaces, who is suppos'd to have been
falsely accused.

Vo solcando un mar crudele
Senza vele
E senza farte
Freme l'onda, il ciel s'imbruna,
Cresci il vento, e manca l'arte :
E il voler della fortuna
Son costretto a seguitar.
Infelice in quello stato.
Son da tutti abbandonato ;
Meco sola è l'innocenza
Che mi porta a naufragar.

To this I will beg leave to add another fine air, sung
by the king of the Parthians, conquer'd by Adrian,
when he endeavours to render even his defeat subser-
vient to his revenge.

Sprezza il furor del vento
Robusta quercia auvezza
Di cento venti è cento
L'injurie a tolerar.
E se pur cade al suolo
Spiega per l'onde il volo ;

E con quel vento istesso
Va contrastando il mar.

There are besides these many others of equal merit; but what are the greatest beauties when out of their proper place? What wou'd an Athenian audience have said, if Oedipus and Orestes, just in the very minute of the discovery, the most interesting part of the drama, had entertain'd them with quavering out a fine air, or repeating similes to Electra and Jocasta! We must therefore after all acknowledge, that the opera, so bewitching to an Italian ear by its musical attractions, tho' on the one hand it may be said to have reviv'd, has notwithstanding on the other, in effect, destroy'd the true Greek tragedy.

Our French opera deviates still more from the right point: as our melopæa differs more than yours from natural declamation, and is withal more languid. It will not allow our scenes their proper length, but requires short dialogues and little sententious remarks, every one of which makes a kind of sonnet.

Let those who are thoroughly acquainted with the state of literature in other nations, and whose knowledge is not confined to the airs of our own ballets, recollect that admirable scene in *la Clemenza di Tito*,
between

between Titus and his favorite, who had conspir'd against him : I mean the scene where Titus addresses himself to Seftus in these divine words :

Siam foli, il tuo fovrano
Non è prefente : apri il tuo core à Tito,
Confida ti all' ami'co ; io ti prometto
Qu' Augufto n'ol faprà.

Or let them read the foliloquy that follows, where Titus has these words, words which fhould be an eternal leffon for kings, and the admiration of all mankind :

——— Il torre altrui la vita
E faculta commune
Al piu vil della terra ; il dar la è folo
De' numi, & de' regnanti'.

These two scenes, comparable to the fineft which Greece ever produced, if not fuperior to them ; these two scenes, worthy of Corneille when he is no declaimer, or of Racine when he is not flimy ; these two scenes, which are not founded on opera love, but on the nobleft sentiments of the human heart, are at least three times as long as the longest scenes in our musical tragedies : but these would not be borne on

our Lyric theatre, which is only supported by maxims of gallantry, and ill painted passions, except the Armida, and some fine scenes in Iphigenia, works more admir'd than imitated amongst us.

Amongst the many faults of our operas, we have, like you, a number of little detach'd airs, even in the most tragical parts; and which are more inexcusable than yours, because they have less affinity to the subject: the words are generally submitted intirely to the composers, who not being able to express themselves in the manly and vigorous terms of our language, require soft, vague, and effeminate words, foreign to the action, and adapted as well as they can to little ballads, like those which at Venice are call'd *Barcarole*. Where, for instance, is the connection between Theseus, just discover'd by his father on the point of being poison'd by him, and this ridiculous speech?

* *Le plus sage*

S'enflamme & s'engage

Sans sçavoir comment.

But with all these faults I am still of opinion, that our good tragic operas, such as *Atys*, *Armida*, and

* i. e. The wisest men often fall in love, and engage themselves they know not how.

Theseus

Theseus, may give us some idea of the Greek theatre, because they are sung like the antient tragedies, and because the chorus, even defective as it now is, consisting of tedious panegyrics on the * morality of love, does notwithstanding, in some measure, resemble the Grecian chorus, by continuing on the stage almost throughout the piece. It does not indeed, amongst us, always say what it ought to say, nor inculcate virtue ;

Et regat iratos, & amet peccare timentes ;

but, upon the whole, one may venture to assert, that the form of our tragic operas, consider'd with regard to some particulars, reminds us of the antient Greek tragedy. Several learned men, who are well acquainted with the works of antiquity, seem to think with me, that they are at once the copy and the destruction of the Athenian stage ; a copy of it, as they admit of the melopœa, the chorusses, machines, and deities, and at the same time the destruction of it ; as they have taught our young men to be sonder of sound than

* The original is '*la morale amoureuse*.' perhaps none but a Frenchman can rightly comprehend what Mr. V. means by this expression : the *morality of love*, as I have literally translated it, does not convey to us the true and precise idea : I shou'd be oblig'd to any of my readers, who are conversant with French operas, for a better interpretation of it,

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fense ; to prefer the tickling of their ears to the improvement of their minds ; the nonsense of sing-song to sublimity of sentiment ; and have besides contributed to the success of many insipid and ill-written performances, which have been supported by a few pleasing airs : and yet, in spite of all these faults, that enchantment which arises from a happy mixture of fine scenes, chorusses, dances, symphony, and a variety of decorations, bears all before it, and silences even criticism itself ; insomuch that the best comedy, or tragedy we have is never seen so often by the same people with half the pleasure as a middling opera. Beauties which are regular, noble, and severe, are seldom much sought after by vulgar minds. *Cinna*, perhaps, is play'd for two or three nights ; and the Venetian Festival shall run three months : a licentious epigram has more readers than an epic poem, and a little romance shall meet with more admirers than *Thuanus's* history. Our nobility very seldom employ good painters, and at the same time will quarrel about the distorted figures, and brittle ornaments from China. We gild and varnish cabinets, yet neglect true architecture : in short, real merit is overlook'd in almost every art and science, in favour of agreeable trifles.

PART

PART the SECOND.

FRENCH and GREEK tragedy compared.

Happily for us, true tragedy appear'd before any of our operas, which might have stifled and suppress'd it. Mairet was the first writer, who, in a tragedy imitated from the Sophonisba of Trissino, introduc'd the three unities which you had taken from the Greeks. By degrees our stage became more and more refined, and shook off that indecency and barbarism which disgraced so many others about this period, and serv'd at the same time for an excuse to those whose unenlighten'd severity of manners banish'd all public representations.

Our actors did not indeed appear like those of Athens, lifted up on cothurni, which were absolute stilts, nor were their faces hid under enormous masks with brass pipes to them, to increase the sound of the voice, and make it more sonorous and terrible: neither had we the melopœa of the Greeks, nor any thing besides a simple harmonious declamation, the same which you had for some time practis'd. In short, our tragedies were a closer imitation of nature: we substituted history in the room of Greek fables; politicks, ambition, love and jealousy took their turns to animate the scene; whilst Augustus, Cinna, Cæsar and Cornelia, names
far

far more respectable than the fabulous heroes of antiquity, often made their appearance on our stage, and spoke as they wou'd have done in antient Rome.

I shall not pretend to assert, that the French theatre was in all respects superior to the Greek, and ought to bury it in oblivion: Inventors have always held the first place in the memories of men; but whatever respect we may have for the geniusses of former ages, it does not prevent our often receiving much more pleasure from those who succeeded them. We admire Homer, but we read Tasso, and find in him a variety of beauties which Homer was a stranger to. We admire Sophocles also, and yet how many of our good tragic writers have master-strokes which, if Sophocles had liv'd after them, he wou'd have been proud to imitate. The Greeks wou'd have learn'd from many of our excellent moderns to unravel their plots more naturally, and to link their scenes together in that artful, though imperceptible manner, so as never to leave the stage empty, and to make the actors go in and out with some reason for so doing.—In this the antients are frequently deficient; and in this Trissino has unfortunately imitated them.

I am satisfy'd, for example, that Sophocles and Euripides wou'd have consider'd the first scene of Bajazet

jazet as a school of instruction, where an old general, by the questions which he asks, informs us, that he is meditating some grand enterprize.

But what did our brave janissaries? they
Pay homage to their sultan, think'st thou, Osmin,
It is sincere, know'st thou the hearts of men,
Or can'st thou read their secret purposes?

And a moment after,

Think'st thou with rapture they wou'd follow me,
And hearken to their visier's voice again?

They wou'd have admir'd the artful method which this conspirator takes in the discovery of his schemes, and the account which he gives of his actions; a merit which was unknown to the antient writers. That mixture of the passions; that contrast of opposite sentiments; those animated dialogues between rivals of both sexes; those quarrels, reciprocal threats and complaints; those interesting disputes where every thing is said that ought to be said; with all those various incidents that are so well manag'd by modern writers, wou'd have astonish'd them. They might perhaps have found fault with Hypolitus for being so ridiculously in love with Aricia, or with his governor for giving him lectures in gallantry, when he says,

Where

Where wou'dst thou thyself have been,
 If still, like thee, thy mother had refus'd,
 With mutual love, to answer Theseus' vows ?

Words taken from Pastor Fido, and much fitter for a
 shepherd than the governor of a prince : but the same
 illustrious criticks wou'd be struck with admiration at
 hearing Phædra cry out,

Who wou'd have e'er believ'd it, my Oenone,
 I have a rival : yes, Hippolitus,
 Whose savage and unconquerable heart
 Was ne'er by pity or affection mov'd,
 This tyrant loves, this conqu'ror is subdued.

The despair of Phædra on the discovery of her rival is
 surely infinitely preferable to the tedious and ill-plac'd
 satire on learned women, which Euripides has put in
 the mouth of his Hypolitus, who degenerates from the
 hero into a low comic character. The Greeks wou'd,
 above all, have been astonish'd at those strokes of the
 true sublime which abound in our modern writers : how
 wou'd they have been charm'd with this :

What cou'd he do, my lord, when three oppos'd him ?
 He might have dy'd.

Or the answer, still perhaps more beautiful and affec-
 ting, which Hermione makes Orestes, when, after
 having

having insisted on his murdering Pyrrhus, she finds herself unfortunately obey'd, and crys out,

What had he done, and wherefore did'st thou slay him ?

What right had'st thou ? who bade thee ?

ORESTES.

O ye gods !

Did not Hermione herself command me ?

HERMIONE.

And shou'd thou have believ'd a frantic lover ?

Indulge me in one more quotation from Cæsar's speech, when they present him with the urn inclosing the ashes of Pompey.

Ye sacred reliques of a demi-god,
Whose noble deeds and ever-honour'd name,
All conqu'ror as I am, I scarce can equal.

The Greeks, my lord, have beauties of another kind, but I appeal to you whether they have any that resemble these.

I will even go farther, and venture to assert that the antients, who were so passionately fond of liberty, and have so often said that there could be no dignity of sentiment but in a common-wealth, might learn to
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ſpeak with energy, even on liberty itſelf, from ſome of our tragedies which were written in the boſom of monarchy.

The moderns have moreover ſucceeded oftener than the antients in ſubjects of pure invention. We had many performances of that kind in the time of cardinal Richlieu : it was indeed his peculiar taſte, as well as that of the Spaniards : he was fond of forming plots and characters, and afterwards giving names to the perſons of the drama, as we do in comedy : and in this he frequently amus'd himſelf, as an agreeable relief from the fatigue of public buſineſs. The Vincellaus of Rotrou is intirely in this taſte, and all the ſtory fabulous : the author wanted to paint a young man of violent paſſions, with a mixture of good and bad qualities ; a father tender and weak : in ſome part of the performance he has ſucceeded. Heraclius and the Cid, taken from the Spaniſh, are both of them invented ſtories : there was indeed an emperor call'd Heraclius, and a Spaniſh captain who had the name of Cid ; but ſcarce one of the adventures which the authors of the tragedies attributeto them ever really happen'd. In Zara and Alzira (if I may take the liberty to mention them, and which I only do becauſe they are well known, and therefore may ſerve better for examples) every thing is feign'd,
even

the names. I cannot imagine after this, how father Brumoy cou'd say, in his account of the Greek theatre, that tragedy will not admit of feign'd subjects, and that this liberty was never taken at Athens. He then sets himself to work to find out a reason for a thing which never was or cou'd be. ' The reason, says he, I believe may be found, in the nature of the human soul ;
 ' nothing can move it but probability : now it is not
 ' probable that facts so noble as those which must be
 ' the subject of tragedy shou'd be absolutely unknown :
 ' if therefore the poet invents the whole subject, even
 ' to the very names, the spectator is shock'd ; every
 ' thing appears incredible to him ; and the piece can
 ' never have its proper effect for want of probability.'

First, I shall beg leave to observe, it is false that the Greeks did not admit this species of tragedy, for Aristotle expressly mentions Agatho as a writer celebrated for it ; and, secondly, it is equally false that these subjects never succeed ; experience decides against Brumoy in this particular : in the third place, the reason which he gives for the poor effect which this kind of tragedy must have is no less absurd ; he must have little knowledge of the human heart, who thinks it cannot be mov'd by fiction : in the fourth place, a subject of pure invention, and a true subject not known, are absolutely
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the same thing to the spectator; and as our stage takes in subjects from every age and nation, a spectator must turn over all the books that ever were written before he can possibly know whether what he sees represented be fable or history; but he will certainly never take that trouble: if the piece is moving and pathetic, he will naturally be affected by it; and when he sees Polyeucte will never think of saying, I do not remember to have heard talk of Paulinus and Severus, such people as those ought not to move or affect me!

Brumoy shou'd only have observ'd, that pieces of this kind are more difficult to write than any others. The character of Phædra was already in Euripides: her declaration of love in Seneca the tragedian: all the scene between Augustus and Cinna in Seneca the philosopher: but Severus and Paulinus must be the product of the author's own brain. But if father Brumoy is mistaken with regard to this, and a few other particulars, his book is notwithstanding upon the whole one of the best and most useful performances we have; and though I find fault with his errors, I have at the same time the highest esteem for his taste and erudition.

To return therefore to the subject in hand, I once more assert, that it wou'd be want of feeling and judgment not to acknowledge that the French stage is infinitely superior to the Greek, in the artful conduct of its plots, in invention, and beauties of diction and sentiment without number ; but, at the same time, it wou'd be the heighth of partiality and injustice not to confess, that love and gallantry have almost ruin'd our stage, and depriv'd us of almost every advantage.

It cannot be denied, that, amongst four hundred tragedies which have been exhibited on our stage, since the time when it began to flourish, there are scarce more than ten or twelve which are not founded on some love intrigue, which is certainly much fitter for comedy: the piece indeed is generally the same, the plot form'd by jealousy and a rupture, and ended in a marriage : one continued scene of coquetry, in short a down right comedy, wherein princes act the principal parts, and a little blood is shed for form's sake. The greater part of these pieces were so very like comedies, that the actors began at last to recite them in the same tone as they did what we call high or serious comedy, which contributed in a great measure to degrade tragedy, all the pomp and magnificence of declamation being intirely forgot. The players piqued themselves on
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the merit of speaking verse exactly in the same manner as prose, without considering that a language above the ordinary language ought to be repeated in a * tone above the vulgar and familiar tone : and if some actors had not happily corrected this fault, our tragedy wou'd soon have dwindled into a heap of discourses on love and gallantry, repeated without force or spirit, in a cold and lifeless manner : as a proof of this, it is not long since, amongst every company of players, the principal parts in tragedy were known only by the names of the gentleman lover, and the lady lover. If a stranger had ask'd at Athens which was their best actor of the lover in Iphigenia, Hecuba, the Heraclides, Oedipus, or Electra, they wou'd not even have understood what he meant by such a question.

The French stage has indeed of late years endeavour'd to wash off this stain by some tragedies, wherein love is represented as a furious and terrible passion, worthy of the theatre ; and by some others, where even the name of love is not so much as mention'd : never did

*Notwithstanding what Mr. Voltaire has here advanc'd in favour of his tragedy tone, it is extremely disgustful to an english ear ; nor can indeed any good reason be given, why heroes and heroines shou'd not talk like other people : but mouthing, ranting, and whining, were for a long time as fashionable on our own, as they can possibly be on the French stage, till nature and Garrick united to convince us of our error, and lead us into a better method.

Love cause so many tears to flow as nature hath : the heart is generally but slightly touch'd by the complaints of a lover, but it is deeply affected by the melancholy situation of a mother on the point of losing her son : certainly it was only in compliment to his friend that Despreaux said,

* Love finely painted by the poet's art,
Opens the surest passage to the heart.

The path of nature is a thousand times more sure, as well as more noble. The finest strokes in Iphigenia are those where Clytemnæstra defends her daughter, and not those where Achilles defends his mistress.

In Semiramis, the design was to have exhibited a spectacle even more affecting than that in Merope, with all the pomp of the antient Greek theatre. It wou'd be a melancholy consideration to reflect, that after our great masters had surpass'd the antients in almost every part of tragedy, we shou'd fall short of them in our representations of it ; but on our stage, one of the greatest obstacles to any grand and pathetic action is, the number of spectators, that croud in with

* ——— De l' amour la sensible pature
Est pour aller au cœur la route la plus sûre.
See Boileau's Art Poétique.

the actors ; an indecency which caus'd remarkable confusion on the first night of Semiramis. The first actress from London was present at the representation, and was astonish'd : she cou'd not conceive how any people in the world cou'd be such enemies to their own pleasures, as to spoil a sight which they might have enjoy'd. This abuse was corrected the ensuing nights, during the run of Semiramis, and might easily be intirely put a stop to. We may think slightly of it if we please, but an inconvenience like this is sufficient to deprive us of a number of excellent productions, which I make no doubt wou'd have appear'd if we had kept our stage free, proper for action, and such as it is in all other parts of Europe.

But this is most certainly not the only evil which calls for a remedy amongst us : I cannot sufficiently express my astonishment and concern at the little care which we take in France to make our theatres worthy of the excellent performances represented in them, and of the nation which encourages them : surely Cinna and Athaliah deserve a better place than a tennis-court, with a few vile decorations at top, in a bad taste, and where the spectators are placed without any order or decorum ; some upon the stage itself, others below in what they call the parterre, where they are crouded

and press'd together in the most indecent manner, throwing themselves sometimes one upon another, as if there was an insurrection of the populace: whilst as far north as we can well travel, our dramatic works are exhibited in theatres a thousand times more magnificent, and with much more decency and decorum.

But above all, how far do we fall short of that good sense and fine taste, with regard to every thing of this kind, which reigns throughout Italy! It reflects shame and disgrace upon us to suffer these reliques of barbarism to remain in a city so large, so well-peopled, so rich, and so polish'd as Paris is; whilst, at the same time, a tenth part of what we expend every day in trifles, as costly as they are useless, might enable us to raise public monuments of every kind that wou'd render it as magnificent as it is populous, and one day perhaps place it on a level with Rome itself, which is our model in every thing. This was one of the great designs of the immortal Colbert. I flatter myself you will pardon this digression, and attribute it to the love I bear to the arts and to my country. I am not without hopes, that one day or other our magistrates may be inspir'd with the noble ambition of imitating the magistrates of Athens, Rome, and modern Italy.

A theatre, built according to the best antient rules, shou'd be very extensive ; shou'd represent a part of some public place, the peristyle of a palace, or the entrance to a temple ; and shou'd be so contrived, that one person of the drama, though seen by the spectators, might not be seen by the other actors, if at any time there shou'd be an occasion for concealing him : it shou'd be made so as to deceive the eye, which is the first thing to be consider'd : it shou'd be capable of exhibiting the greatest pomp and splendor imaginable : every spectator shou'd see and hear equally well in whatever part he was seated. But how can this be ever expected upon a narrow stage, in the midst of a croud of young fellows, who will scarce leave the actors ten foot space ? Hence it arises, that most of our plays are nothing but long discourses ; all theatrical action is lost, or if practis'd, appears ridiculous. This abuse remains, like many others, because it is establish'd ; and for the same reason that we do not pull our houses down, though we know them to be badly built. A public nuisance is seldom remov'd but at the last extremity. When I speak of theatrical action, I mean dress, ceremony, assemblies of the people, incidents and events necessary to the piece ; and not any of those shews frequently exhibited, rather childish than

than grand, the resources of art to supply the deficiencies of the poet, and amuse the eye when they are incapable of charming the ear, or moving the heart. I saw a play at London, wherein was represented the coronation of a king of England with all the exactness imaginable: a knight, arm'd at all points, enter'd on horseback upon the stage. I have often heard people telling strangers, O! the charming opera that we have been at, we saw above two hundred guards upon the full gallop. These gentlemen had no idea, that four good verses in a piece were better than a troop of horse. At Paris we have a company of strollers, who seldom having any thing of real merit to represent, entertain us with fire-works: but, many years ago, Horace, who had perhaps more taste than any of the antients, finely ridiculed all those fooleries that bewitch'd the vulgar.

*Effeda festinant, pilenta, petorrita, naves;
Captivum portatur ebur, captiva Corinthus.
Si foret in terris, rideret Democritus;
Spectaret populum ludis attentius ipfis.*

PART the THIRD.

On SEMIRAMIS.

You will perceive, my lord, from the foregoing observations, that it was a pretty bold undertaking to represent Semiramis assembling the several orders of the state, and declaring to them her intended marriage; the ghost of Ninus, coming out of the tomb to prevent the incest, and revenge his own death; Semiramis entering the mausolæum, and returning from it, wounded by her son, and just expiring. There was reason to fear that a spectacle of this kind would be disagreeable to many; and in effect so it was; for three parts of those who frequent the theatre, and were used to amorous elegies, combined together against this new species of tragedy. We are told that formerly, in a city of antient Greece, rewards were proposed for those who could invent any new pleasure: the direct contrary happen'd with regard to Semiramis. Whatever efforts were made, notwithstanding, to suppress this species of the drama, which has in it all the terror of true tragedy, they could not succeed: it was eccho'd on every side, both in writing and conversation, that apparitions were childish things to be produced

produced before a refined and sensible people. But why so? did not all antiquity believe in them, and shall we not conform to antiquity! Has not our religion itself given a sanction to these extraordinary strokes of providence? and is it notwithstanding ridiculous and absurd to repeat them?

The Roman philosophers had no faith in ghosts in the time of the emperors, and yet young Pompey raises one in the Pharsalia. The English have certainly no more belief in spirits than the Romans had, and yet they see every day with pleasure, in the tragedy of Hamlet, the ghost of a king, who appears nearly the same as the apparition of Ninus did at Paris. I am at the same time far from justifying the tragedy of Hamlet in every respect; it is a gross and barbarous piece, and wou'd never be borne by the lowest of the rabble in France or Italy. Hamlet runs mad in the second act, and his mistress in the third; the prince * kills the father of his mistress and fancies

C 3

he

* The original is 'croyant tuer un rat,' and a little before we are told that Hamlet 'devient fou au second acte' runs mad in the second act. Mr. Voltaire, as is evident from the whole which he has here advanc'd, seems, at the time when he wrote this, to have been very little acquainted with Hamlet, who, we all know, did neither run mad, nor take Polonius for a rat: but, as Shakespear takes care to inform us, when the wind sat fair,
knew

he his killing a rat; and the heroine of the play throws herself into the river. They dig her grave upon the stage, and the grave-diggers, holding the dead-men's skulls in their hands, talk nonsense worthy of them. Hamlet answers their abominable stuff by some whimsies not less disgusting: during this time one of the actors makes the conquest of Pologne. Hamlet, his mother, and father in-law, drink together upon the stage: they sing at table, quarrel, beat and kill one another: one wou'd think the whole piece was the product of the imagination of a drunken savage: and yet, amongst all these gross irregularities, which make the English theatre even at this day so absurd and barbarous, we find in Hamlet, which is still more strange and unaccountable, some sublime strokes worthy of the greatest genius. It seems as if nature took pleasure to unite in the head of Shakespear all that we can imagine great and forcible, together with all that the grossest dullness cou'd produce of every thing that is most low and detestable.

knew a hawk from a hern-flaw. But Mr. V. like other great Geniusses, is sometimes a little too apt to take things upon trust, and judge hastily he wou'd not otherwise so rashly, and so frequently, condemn the inimitable Shakespear.

It must be acknowledg'd, that, amongst the beauties that shine forth in the midst of all these horrid extravagancies, the ghost of Hamlet's father is one of the most striking : it has always a strong effect on the English, I mean on those who are the best judges, and are most hurt by the irregularity of their old theatre. This ghost inspires more terror, even in the reading, than the apparition of Darius in the Persians of Æschylus : and why does it ? because Darius, in Æschylus, only appears to foretell the misfortunes of his family ; whereas, in Shakespear, the ghost of Hamlet appears to demand vengeance, and to reveal secret crimes. It is neither useless, nor brought in by force, but serves to convince mankind, that there is an invisible power, the master of nature. All men have a sense of justice imprinted on their hearts, and naturally wish that heaven wou'd interest itself in the cause of innocence : in every age therefore, and in every nation, they will behold with pleasure, the supreme being engag'd in the punishment of crimes which cou'd not come within the reach of human laws : this is a consolation to the weak, and a restraint on the insolence and obstinacy of the powerful.

-----Heaven

Will oft suspend its own eternal laws
 When justice calls, reversing death's decree,
 Thus to chastise the sov'reigns of the earth,
 And terrify mankind-----

Thus Semiramis speaks to the high priest of Babylon, and thus the successor of Samuel might have spoke to Saul, when the ghost of Samuel came to tell him of his condemnation.

I will go still further, and venture to affirm, when an extraordinary circumstance of this kind is mention'd in the beginning of a tragedy, when it is properly prepar'd, when things are so situated as to render it necessary, and even look'd for and desir'd by the spectators; it ought then to be consider'd as perfectly natural: it is at the same time sufficiently obvious, that these bold strokes are not to be too often repeated.

Nec Deus interfit nisi dignus vindice nodus.

I most certainly wou'd not, in imitation of Euripides, make Diana descend at the end of the tragedy of Phædra, nor Minerva in the Iphigenia in Tauris;

nor

nor wou'd I, as Shakespear has done, bring in the evil genius of Brutus appearing to him in his tent: I wou'd never make use of such resources but when they cou'd raise terror, and at the same time carry on the business of the play. I cou'd wish, moreover, that the intervention of these supernatural beings shou'd not appear absolutely necessary: with regard to this I must explain myself: if the plot of a tragedy is so intricate and perplex'd, that we can no way disentangle ourselves but by the help of a prodigy, the spectator perceives the distress the poet is in, and consequently the weakness of his resource: he only sees a writer who has made a false step, and is put to his shifts to recover himself: the more astonishing it is, the more the design appears.

Quodcunque offendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.

But I will suppose the author of a tragedy had it principally in view to inform mankind, that God sometimes punishes extraordinary crimes by extraordinary means; I will suppose that his piece was so artfully conducted, that the spectator every moment expected the ghost of an assassinated king demanding vengeance, though the appearance was by no means

necessary to the clearing up an embarrass'd plot. I say, that thus circumstanced, a prodigy of this kind, supposing it to be well manag'd, wou'd have a great effect, in any language, age, or country whatever.

Such is, pretty nearly, the conduct of Semiramis, (those beauties excepted with which it was not in my power to adorn it) from the very first scene we perceive that every thing must be done by the intervention of divine power; and, from act to act, every thing turns on this particular notion. 'Tis an avenging God who inspires Semiramis with that remorse which she wou'd never have felt in her prosperity, if the voice of Ninus himself had not terrify'd her in the midst of all her triumphs: the same God, by that remorse which he had inspir'd, prepares the way for her punishment; and hence arises the whole instructive moral of the piece. The design of the antient tragedies was generally to establish some great maxim or sublime truth: thus Sophocles finishes his Oedipus with observing, that no man can be called happy before his death; and in Semiramis the moral is contain'd in these verses:

There are crimes
Offended heaven never will forgive.

A maxim

A maxim much more important than that of Sophocles: but what instruction, the reader perhaps may object, can arise to the generality of mankind from a crime so uncommon, and a punishment still more extraordinary? I acknowledge, that the catastrophe of Semiramis cannot often occur, but what happens every day may be met with in the last verses of this piece;

————— remember that our secret crimes
Are witness'd by the gods—————

There are few families on earth where this may not be sometimes apply'd: with regard to particulars of this kind, tragical subjects, that are ever so much above the fortunes of common people, have a real respect to and connection with the manners of all mankind.

I might indeed apply to Semiramis, the moral with which Euripides finishes his *Alcestes*, a piece wherein the marvellous has a much greater share than in mine, viz. that the gods employ the most wonderful and astonishing means in the execution of their divine decrees, and that the great events which they bring about, surpass the understandings of men.

Because,

Because, my lord, and only because this little work of mine breaths the purest and most severe morality, I have taken the liberty to address it to your lordship. True tragedy is the school of virtue, and the only difference between a refined theatre, and books of morality is, that the instruction of the former is all in action, that it is more interesting, and heightened by the charms of an art invented to make earth and heaven happy, and which was therefore truly call'd, the language of the gods. You, my lord, who possess this talent with so many others, will, I doubt not, pardon me this long detail, on a subject which perhaps has never yet been thoroughly understood; but which wou'd no longer be obscure, if your lordship wou'd deign to communicate to me those lights into antiquity, of which you have so perfect a knowledge.

SEMIRAMIS.



SEMIRAMIS.

A

TRAGEDY.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SEMIRAMIS.

ARSACES, or NINIAS.

AZEMA, a Princess of the Family of Belus.

ASSUR, a Prince of the Family of Belus.

OROES, High-Priest.

OTANES, a Favourite of Semiramis.

MITRANES, Friend of Arsaces.

CEDAR, Friend of Assur.

Guards, Magi, Slaves, Attendants.

SEMIRAMIS.

SEMI RAMIS.

A

TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

The scene represents a large peristyle, at the bottom of which is the palace of Semiramis. Gardens with fine hanging terrasses, rais'd above the palace : on the right hand the temple of the Magi, and on the left a mausolæum adorn'd with obelisks.

SCENE I.

ARSACES, MITRANES.

Two slaves at a distance carrying a coffer.

ARSACES.

ONCE more, Mitranes, thou behold'st thy friend,

Who, in obedience to the royal mandate
In secret sent, revisits Babylon,
The seat of empire : how Semiramis

Imprints

Imprints the image of her own great soul
 On ev'ry object ! these stupendous piles,
 These deep enclosures, where Euphrates pours
 His tributary waves ; the temple's pride,
 The hanging gardens, and the splendid tomb
 Of Ninus, wond'rous monuments of art !
 And only less to be admir'd than her
 Who rais'd them ! here, in all her splendid pomp,
 More honour'd than the monarchs of the East,
 Arfaces shall behold this glorious queen.

MITRANES.

O my Arfaces, credit not the voice
 Of Fame, she is deceitful oft, and vain ;
 Perhaps hereafter thou may'st weep with me,
 And admiration on a nearer view
 May turn to pity.

ARSACES.

Wherefore ?

MITRANES.

Sunk in grief,

Semiramis hath spread o'er ev'ry heart
 The sorrows which she feels ; sometimes she raves,
 Filling the air with her distressful cries,
 As if some vengeful God pursued her ; sits
 Silent and sad within these lonely vaults,

Sacred to night, to sorrow, and to death,
 Which mortals dare not enter; where the ashes
 Of Ninus, our late honour'd sov'reign, lie :
 There will she oft fall on her knees and weep :
 With slow and fearful steps she glides along,
 And beats her breast besprinkled with her tears :
 Oft as she treads her solitary round,
 Will she repeat the names of son and husband,
 And call on heav'n, which in its anger seems
 To thwart her in the zenith of her glory.

ARSACES.

Whence can her sorrows flow ?

MITRANES.

Th' effect is dreadful ;
 The cause unknown.

ARSACES.

How long hath she been thus
 Oppress'd, Mitranes ?

MITRANES.

From the very time
 When first her orders came to bring Arfaces.

ARSACES.

Me, said'st thou ?

MITRANES.

MITRANES.

You, my lord : when Babylon
Rejoicing met to celebrate thy conquests,
And saw the banners thy victorious arm
Had wrested from our vanquish'd foes ; when first
Euphrates brought to our delighted shore
The lovely Azema, from Belus sprung,
Whom thou had'st sav'd from Scythian ravishers,
Ev'n in that hour of triumph and success,
Ev'n in the bosom of prosperity,
The heart of majesty was pierc'd with grief,
And the throne lost its lustre.

ARSACES.

Azema

Was not to blame ; she cou'd not be the cause
Of sorrow or distress ; one look from her
Wou'd sooth the wrath of gods : but say, my friend,
Semiramis is still a sov'reign here,
Her heart is not for ever sunk in grief ?

MITRANES.

No : when her noble mind shakes off the burthen,
Resumes its strength, and shines in native lustre.
Then we behold in her exalted soul

Pow'rs

Pow'rs that excel whatever flatt'ry's self
 Hath e'er bestow'd on kings ; but when she sinks
 Beneath this dreadful malady, loose flow
 The reins of empire, dropping from her hand ;
 Then the proud Satrap, fiery Assur, guides
 The helm, and makes the nations groan beneath him :
 The fatal secret never yet hath reach'd
 The walls of Babylon : abroad we still
 Are envy'd, but, alas ! we mourn at home.

A R S A C E S.

What lessons of instruction to weak mortals,
 When happiness is mingled thus with woe !
 I too am wretched, thus depriv'd of him
 Whose piercing wisdom best cou'd give me council,
 And lead me through the mazes of a court.
 O I have cause to weep : without a father,
 Left as I am to all the dang'rous passions
 Of heedless youth, without a friendly guide,
 What rocks encompass, and what shoals affright me !

M I T R A N E S.

I weep with thee the loss of him we lov'd,
 The good old man ; Phraates was my friend ;
 Ninus esteem'd and gave to him the care
 Of Ninias his dear son, our country's hope :

But

But O ! one fatal day destroy'd them both,
Father and son : to voluntary exile
Devoted, long he liv'd : his banishment
Was fortunate to thee, and made thee great :
Close by his side, in honour's glorious field,
Arfaces fought, and conquer'd for his country :
Now, rank'd with princes, thy exalted virtue
Claims its reward by merit all thy own.

A R S A C E S.

I know not what may be my portion here :
Perhaps, distinguish'd on Arbazan's plains
With fair success, my name is not unknown :
On Oxus' banks to great Semiramis,
When vanquish'd nations paid the homage due,
From her triumphant carr she dropp'd a ray
Of her own glory on Arfaces' head :
But oft the soldier, honour'd in the field,
In courts neglected lies, and is forgotten.
My father told me in his dying hour
The fortune of Arfaces here depended
Upon the common cause ; then gave to me
These precious relicks, which from ev'ry eye
He had preserv'd : I must deliver them
To the high-priest, for he alone can judge,
And know their value : I must talk with him

In secret, touching my own fate, for he
Can best conduct me to Semiramis.

MITRANES.

He seldom sees the queen : in solitude
Obscure he lives : his holy ministry
Engrosses all his care ; without ambition,
Fearless, and void of art : is always seen
Within the temple, never at the court :
Never affects the pride of rank and title,
Nor his tiara near the diadem
Immodest wears : the less he seeks for greatness,
The more is he admir'd, the more rever'd :
I have access to ev'ry avenue
Of his retirement in this sacred place,
And can this moment talk to him in secret ;
E'er day's too far advanc'd I'll bring him hither.

S C E N E II.

ARSACES alone.

Immortal gods ! for what am I reserv'd ?
Make known your will : why did my dying father
Thus send me to the sanctuary, me
A soldier, bred amidst the din of arms ?
A lover too ? How can Arsaces serve
The gods of the Chaldeans ?—Ha ! what voice

From

From yonder tomb in plaintive accents strikes
 My frighted ear, and makes my hair to stand
 An end with horror ! Near this place I've heard
 The spirit of Ninus dwells—again it shrieks—
 It shocks my soul—Ye dark and dreary caves,
 And thou, the shade of my illustrious master,
 Thou voice of heav'n, what woud'st thou with Arsaces ?

S C E N E III.

ARSACES, OROES, the high-priest, the magi attending
 him, MITRANES.

MITRANES.

[Speaking to Orocs.

He's here, my lord, and waits to give you up
 Those precious relicks.

ARSACES.

Most revered father,
 Permit a soldier to approach your presence,
 Pleas'd to fulfil a father's last command,
 One whom you deign'd to love ; thus at your feet,
 Obedient to his will, I here resign them.

OROES.

Welcome ! thou brave and noble youth ! that God
 Who governs all, and not a father's will,
 Guided thee here : Phraates was my friend ;
 Dear is his mem'ry to me ; thou shalt know

Perhaps

Perhaps hereafter how I love his son:
Where are the gifts he sent me?

A R S A C E S.

[The slaves deliver the coffer to two of the magi, who place it on an altar.

Here, my lord.

O R O E S.

[Opening the coffer, bowing reverentially to it, and seeming greatly affected.

Ye sacred relicks! do these eyes at length
Behold you! O I weep for joy to press
These monuments of woe, whilst tears recall
My solemn oath: Mitranes, let no ear
Profane disturb our holy mystery:
We wou'd be private.

[The magi retire.

Mark this seal, Arsaces:

'Tis that which to the laws of Ninus gave
Their public force, and kept the world in awe:
The letter too, which with his dying hand
He wrote: Arsaces, view the wreath that crown'd
His royal brows, and his victorious sword:
The vanquish'd Medes and Persians felt its pow'r;
It comes at last to vindicate its master,
And to revenge him: useless instrument

Against

Against base treach'ry, and destructive poison,
Whose mortal—

ARSACES.

Heaven ! what say'st thou ?

OROES.

The dread secret

Hath long been hid in darkness from the eyes
Of men within this sepulchre ; the shade
Of Ninus, and offended heav'n, long time
Have rais'd their voice in vain, and call'd for ven-
geance.

ARSACES.

It must be as thou say'st : for know, but now,
Ev'n on this spot, I heard most dreadful groans.

OROES.

It was the voice of Ninus.

ARSACES.

Twice the noise

Affrighted me.

OROES.

T'was he: he calls for vengeance.

ARSACES.

He has a right to ask it : but on whom ?

OROES.

On the vile murth'ers, whose detested hands
Had of the best of sov'reigns robb'd mankind :

No tracks are left behind of the base treason,
 But all with him lies bury'd in the tomb :
 With ease might they deceive the sons of men,
 But not th' all-seeing eye of watchful heav'n,
 Which pierces the deep night of human falsehood.

A R S A C E S.

O ! wou'd to heav'n this feeble hand had pow'r
 To punish crimes like these ! I know not wherefore,
 But when I cast my eyes towards yon tomb,
 New horrors rise : O might I not consult
 That venerable shade, th' inhabitant
 Of those dark mansions ?

O R A C L E S.

No ; it is forbidden :

An oracle severe long since denounc'd
 The wrath of heav'n against whoe'er shou'd press
 Into this vale of tears, inhabited
 By death and the avenging gods : await
 With me, Arsaces, for the day of justice :
 Soon will it come, and all shall be accomplish'd :
 I can no more : sequester'd from the world,
 I pray in secret to offended heav'n,
 Which, as it wills, commissions me to speak,
 Or close my lips in silence : I have said

All that I dare, and all I ought: be careful
 Least in these walls a word, or look, or gesture,
 Betray the secret which the god by me
 Hath trusted with thee; for on that depends
 His glory, Asia's welfare, and thy life.

Approach, ye magi, hide these sacred relics
 Beneath the altar.

[The great gate of the palace opens, Assur appears at a distance, surrounded with attendants and guards on every side.

Ha! the palace opens:

The courtiers crouding to the queen: behold
 The haughty Assur with his servile throng
 Of flatt'ers round him! O almighty pow'r!
 On whom dost thou bestow thy bounties here?
 O monster!

ARSACES.

Ha! what mean'st thou?

O ROES.

Fare thee well:

When night shall cast her sable mantle o'er
 These guilty walls, I'll have more converse with thee,
 Before the gods: revere them my Arsaces,
 For know, brave youth, their eyes are fix'd on thee.

SCENE

S C E N E IV.

ARSACES, MITRANES, in the front of the stage,
ASSUR, CEDAR, with attendants, on one side.

ARSACES.

His words are dreadful ; they affright my soul :
What horrid crimes ! and what a court is here !
How little known ! my royal master poison'd,
And Assur, but too well I see, suspected !

MITRANES.

Assur is sprung of royal race, and claims
The deference due to his authority :
He is the fav'rite of Semiramis,
And thou, without a blush, may'st pay him homage.

ARSACES.

Homage to him !

ASSUR.

[To Cedar.

Ha ! do my eyes deceive me,
Or is Arsaces here without my order ?
Amazing insolence !

ARSACES.

What haughtiness !

ASSUR.

[advancing.

Come hither, youth : what new engagements here
Have brought you from the camp ?

D 2

ARSACES.

ARSACES.

My duty, Sir,
And the queen's orders.

ASSUR.

Did the queen send for you?

ARSACES.

She did.

ASSUR.

But, know you not, with her commands
You shou'd have ask'd for mine?

ARSACES.

I know not that,
And shou'd have thought the honour of her crown
Debas'd by such a mean submission to thee :
My lord, you must forgive a foldier's roughness,
We are bad courtiers : bred up in the plains
Of Arbazan and Scythia, I have serv'd
Your court, but am not much acquainted with it.

ASSUR.

Age, time, and place, perhaps may teach you, Sir.
What wou'd you with the queen? for know, young
man,

Assur alone can lead you to her presence.

ARSACES.

I come to ask my valour's best reward,
The honour still to serve her.

ASSUR.

ASSUR.

Thou want'st more,
Presumptuous boy! I know thy bold pretences
To Azema, but that thou woud'st conceal.

ARSACES.

Yes: I adore that lovely maid: her heart
Would I prefer to empire: my respect,
My tend'rest love—

ASSUR.

No more: thou know'st not whom
Thou art insulting thus: what! join the race
Of a Sarmatian to the demi-gods
Of Tigris and Euphrates! mark me well:
In pity to thy youth I wou'd advise thee
Ne'er, on thy peril, to Semiramis
Impart thy insolent request; for know,
Rash boy, if thou shou'd'st dare to violate
The rights of Assur, 'twill not pass unpunish'd.

ARSACES.

I'll go this instant: thou hast giv'n me courage:
Thus threat'nings always terrify Arsaces:
Thou hast no right, whate'er thy pow'r may be,
T'affront a soldier who has serv'd his queen,
The state, and thee: perhaps my warmth offends;

But thou art rasher than myself, to think
That I wou'd bend beneath thy servile yoke,
Or tremble at thy pow'r.

ASSUR.

Perhaps thou may'lt :
I'll teach thee what a subject may expect
For insolence like this.

ARSACES.

We both may learn it.

S C E N E V.

SEMIRAMIS at the further end of the stage,
leaning on her women.

OTANES, ASSUR, ARSACES, MITRANES, in the front.

OTANES, [advancing.

My lord, the queen at present wou'd be private :
You must retire, and give her sorrows way :
Withdraw, ye gods, the hand of vengeance from her !

ARSACES.

How I lament her fate !

ASSUR. [To one of his attendants.

Let us begone,

And study how we best may turn her griefs
To our advantage.

[Semiramis comes forward, and is join'd by Otanes.

OTANES.

OTANES.

* My royal mistress, be yourself again,
And wake once more to joy and happiness.

SEMIRAMIS.

O death ! when wilt thou come with friendly shade
To close these eyes that hate the light of day ?
Be shut, ye caves ; horrible phantom, hence !
Strike if thou wilt, but threaten me no more.
Otanès, is Arsaces come ?

OTANES.

E'er morn

Rose on the temple, madam, he was there.

SEMIRAMIS.

That dreadful voice, from heav'n or hell I know not,
Which in the dead of night so shakes my soul,
Told me, my sorrows, when Arsaces came,
Wou'd soon be o'er.

OTANES.

Rely then on the gods,
And let the chearful ray of hope dispel
This melancholy.

* The beginning of this scene seems awkwardly conducted. Assur, Arsaces, and Mitrane, come in only to go out again : it wou'd, I think, have commenc'd much more properly with this speech of Otanès.

SEMIRAMIS.

Is Arfaces here ?

Methinks, when I but hear his name, my soul
Is less disturb'd, and guilt sits lighter on me !

OTANES.

O ! quit, for ever quit the sad remembrance :
Let the bright days of great Semiramis,
Replete with glory, blot one moment out
That broke the chain of thy ill-fated nuptials :
Had Ninus driv'n thee from his throne and bed,
All Babylon with thee had been destroy'd ;
But happily for us, and for mankind,
That wanted such distinguish'd virtues, you
Prevented him ; and fifteen years of toil,
Spent in the service of thy country, lands
Desart and waste made fertile by thy care,
The savage tamed, and yielding to the laws,
The useful arts, obedient to thy voice,
Uprising still, the glorious monuments
Of wealth and pow'r, the wonder of mankind,
And the loud plaudit of a grateful people,
All plead thy cause before the throne of heav'n ;
But if impartial justice hold the scale,
If vengeance is requir'd for Ninus' death,

Why

Why thus shou'd Assur brave the angry gods,
And live in peace? He was more guilty far
Than thou wert, yet the ruthless hand that pour'd
The fatal draught ne'er shakes with fear: he feels
No stings of conscience, no remorse affrights him.

S E M I R A M I S.

Our duties diff'rent, diff'rent is our fate:
Where ties are sacred, crimes are heavier far:
I was his wife, Otanes, and I stand
Without excuse; my conscience is my judge
And my accuser: but I hoped the gods,
Offended at my crimes, had punish'd me
Enough, when they depriv'd me of my child;
Hoped my successful toils, that made the earth
Respect my name, had sooth'd the wrath of heav'n:
But months on months have pass'd in agony
Since this dire spectre hath appall'd my soul:
My eyes for ever see him, and my ears
Still hear his cries: I get me to the tomb,
But dare not enter: trembling I revere
His ashes, and invoke his honour'd shade,
Which only answers me in dismal groans.
Some dread event is nigh: perhaps the time
Is come to expiate the offence.

O T A N E S.

But think'st thou

The spirit of thy lord hath left indeed
The mansions of the dead, and stalks abroad ?
Ofttimes the soul, by pow'rful fancy led,
Starts at a phantom of its own creation ;
Still it beholds the objects it has made,
And ev'ry thing we fear is present to us.

S E M I R A M I S.

O no ! it was not the wild dream of fancy
By slumber wrought, I saw him but too well :
The stranger sleep had long withheld from me
His sweet delusions ; watchful as I stood,
And mused on my unhappy fate, a voice
Close to my bed, methought, cry'd out, Arfaces !
The name reviv'd me : well thou know'st, long time
Assur has pierc'd this heart with deadly grief :
I shudder at his presence, and the blushes
That shew my guilt increase my punishment,
Hate the reproachful witness of my shame,
And wish I cou'd — but wherefore shou'd I add
To crimes like mine fresh guilt ? I sought Arfaces
To punish Assur, and the thought of him
Awhile reliev'd me ! but in the sweet moment
Of consolation, sudden stood before me

That

That minister of death, all bath'd in blood,
And in his hand a falchion : still I see,
Still hear him : comes he to defend, or punish ?
'Twas at that very hour Arfaces came.
This day was fix'd by heav'n to end my sorrows,
But peace is yet a stranger to my soul,
And hope is lost in horror and despair :
The load of life is grown too heavy for me,
My throne is hateful, and my glories past
But add fresh weight to my calamities.
Long time I've hid my sorrows from the world
And blush'd in secret, fearful to consult
That rev'rend sage whom Babylon adores :
I wou'd not thus degrade the majesty
Of sov'reign pow'r, or let Semiramis
Betray her fears before a mortal's eye,
But I have sent to Libya's sands in secret
There to consult the oracle of Jove :
As if remov'd from man, the God of truth
Had hid in desert plains his will divine.
Alas ! Otanes, that dread pow'r which dwells
Within these lonely walls, hath long receiv'd
My fears and adorations ; at his altars
My gifts were offer'd, and my incense rose ;
But gifts and incense never can atone.

For crimes like mine : to-day I shall receive
Answers from Memphis.

S C E N E VI.

SEMIRAMIS, OTANES, MITRANES.

MITRANES.

An Egyptian priest
Is at the palace gate, and begs admittance.

SEMIRAMIS.

Then will my woes be ended, or complete.
Let us be gone, and hide from Babylon
Her queen's disgraceful sorrows : let Arsaces
Be sent to me : soon may his presence calm
This storm of grief, and sooth my troubled soul !

END of the FIRST ACT.

A C T II. S C E N E I.

ARSACES, AZEMA.

AZEMA.

TO thee, Arsaces, this great empire owes
Its lustre, I my liberty and life.
When vanquish'd Scythia, thirsting for revenge,
From

From its wild desert rush'd indignant forth,
And bore down all before it ; when my father,
Oppress'd by numbers, fell, and left me there
A hapless slave ; then, arm'd with thunder, thou,
Piercing their dark retreats, didst break my chains,
And give me ample vengeance on my foes.
Thou wert my great deliverer, Arsaces,
And in return I give thee all my heart ;
I will be thine, and only thine ; but O !
Our fatal passion will destroy us both :
Thy gen'rous heart, too open and sincere,
Believ'd that gallant deeds, and fair renown
In arms, wou'd gain thee honours in a court ;
And, fearless of success, thou bring'st with thee
A hero's fierceness and a lover's heart.
Assur's incens'd : alas ! thou dost not know him :
He is too pow'rful for us ; he rules all
At Babylon ; and much, I fear, abuses
His fatal influence o'er Semiramis :
He is thy great inexorable—rival.

ARSACES.

Ha ! does he love thee ?

AZEMA.

No : that savage mind,
Subtle and dark, a foe to ev'ry virtue,

Insensible

Insensible to love and ev'ry charm
But those ambition boasts, cou'd never feel
A real passion for me: but he knows
That Azema's descended from the race
Of our Assyrian kings, and soon may claim
My right of empire here, as next the throne;
And therefore means to blend his int'rest here
With mine, and gain the sceptre for himself:
But if the youth whom Ninus had decreed,
Ev'n from my infant years, to be my husband,
The son of great Semiramis, and heir
Of Babylon, were living now, and here
Wou'd offer me his heart and half his empire,
By love I swear, and by thy precious self,
Ninias shou'd sue in vain, and see me quit
A throne with him for banishment with thee.
Ev'n Scythia's bleak inhospitable plains
Wou'd yield a sweet asylum to our loves;
For they wou'd eccho my Arfaces' name,
And sound his praise: those barren wilds, where first
Our passion grew, wou'd be to me a court,
Nor shou'd I cast a thought on Babylon.

But much I fear this subtle statesman means
To carry his resentment further still:
I've search'd his soul, and know the blackness of it:

Or

Or I mistake, or guilt fits lightly on him;
Already he is jealous of thy glory,
He fears, and hates thee.

ARSACES.

And I hate him more,
But fear him not, since Azema is mine :
Keep thou thy faith, and I despise his anger.
At least I share with him the royal favor :
I saw the queen, and her humanity
Equal'd the pride of Assur : when I fell
Prostrate before her, gently she uprais'd me,
And call'd me the support of Babylon :
With pride I heard the flatt'ring voice of her
Whose name contending kings unite to honour :
The distance 'twixt her royal state and mine
Was lessen'd soon by mildest condescension ;
It touch'd, it melted me ; and, after thee,
To me she seem'd, of all the human race,
Most nearly to resemble the divine.

AZEMA.

If she protects us, Assur's threats are vain;
I heed them not.

ARSACES.

Inspir'd by thee, I went,
Fearless and brave, to lay before the feet

Of my great mistress, that aspiring passion
Which Assur dreads, and Azema approves;
When lo, that very moment came a priest
From Ægypt with Ammonian Jove's decree:
Trembling she open'd quick the awful scroll,
First fix'd her eyes on me, then sudden turn'd
Her face aside, and wept: stood fix'd in grief
Like one distraught, then sigh'd, and vanish'd from
me.

They tell me, she is fall'n into despair,
And hath of late been dreadfully pursued
By some avenging god: I pity her:
'Tis wonderful, that after fifteen years,
Heav'n, that so long defended, shou'd at last
Oppress her thus: by what hath she offended
The angry gods, and wherefore are they chang'd?

A Z E M A.

We hear of nought but dreadful spectres, omens,
And vengeance from above: the queen of late
Lets loose the reins of empire: we had cause
To fear for Babylon, least subtle Assur,
Who knows her weakness, in this dang'rous time,
Shou'd seize the helm, and bury all in ruin:
But the queen came, and all was calm again;

All own'd the pow'r of her despotic sway.
If I have any knowledge of the court,
The queen hates Assur, but keeps fair with him,
And watches close : they're fearful of each other,
Wou'd quarrel soon, but that some secret cause,
Some mutual int'rest, still prevents a rupture :
I saw her fire indignant at his name ;
The blushes on her cheeks betray'd her thoughts,
And her heart seem'd to glow with deep resentment :
But sudden changes happen in a court ;
Return, and speak to her.

ARSACES.

I will ; but know not
Whether again I e'er shall gain admittance.

AZEMA.

Thou hast my vows, my wishes, and my pray'rs
For thy success : I glory in my love,
And in my duty : let Semiramis
Rule o'er the vanquish'd East, I envy her
Nor fame nor conquest ; let the world be hers,
Arsaces mine : but Assur comes this way.

ARSACES.

The traitor ! how I shudder at his presence !
My soul abhors him.

SCENE

S C E N E II.

ASSUR, ARSACES, AZEMA.

ASSUR.

Your reception, Sir,
I find, was noble, such as kings have oft
Solicited in vain : you saw the queen
In secret, did she not reprove a conduct
Injurious to my honour and her own ?
Did she not tell thee Azema's design'd
For Assur, not for thee ? Long since her hand
To Ninias giv'n was for the blood of kings
Alone reserv'd ; and therefore is my right,
As next to the throne : did she acquaint you, Sir,
Into what fatal snares your pride wou'd lead you,
That neither fame nor honours will excuse
Your bold pretensions ?

ARSACES.

I well know what's due
To your high birth, and to the rank you bear,
And shou'd have paid it, tho' you had not thus
Instructed me ; but as a master here
I own you not : your royal ancestors,
From Belus sprung, perhaps may give you claim
To Azema ; the welfare of the state,

Present

Present and future, all, I own, conspire
To raise your hopes of bliss, and make her yours :
These are your claims, and I acknowledge them :
But I have one that's worth 'em all : I love her :
I might have added this, that I reveng'd
And sav'd her, gave new lustre to the throne
Which she was born to fill, if I had chosen,
Like thee, to boast of my exploits before her.
But I must leave thee, to perform her orders,
Semiramis and her I shall obey,
And them alone : a day perhaps may come
When thou shalt be our master : heav'n sometimes
In anger sends us kings : but thou'rt deceiv'd,
At least in one of thy ambitious views,
If 'mongst thy subjects thou hast rank'd Arfaces.

ASSUR.

The measure's full : thou court'st thy own destruction.

S C E N E III.

ASSUR, AZEMA.

I've borne his insolence too long already,
'Tis time we enter on a nobler subject,
And worthier thy attention.

A Z E M A.

A Z E M A.

Can there be one?

But speak.

A S S U R.

E'er long all Asia shall attend
On our resolves, and low concerns like these
Must pass unheeded by : a world demands
Our mutual care : Semiramis is now
The shadow of herself, her glory's past,
That star which shone with such transcendent lustre,
Declining now, sends forth a feeble ray ;
The people see and wonder at her fall,
Whilst ev'ry tongue demands a —— successor :
That word sufficeth : you well know my right :
'Tis not for love to deal forth sov'reign pow'r,
And point out who shall rule in Babylon ;
Not that my soul, to beauty blind, wou'd make
A virtue of insensibility ;
But I shou'd blush for thee and for myself,
To see the welfare of a nation thus
Dependant on a sigh : thoughts worthier both
Must guide my fortune, and determine thine :
Our ancestors the same, we shou'd offend
Their venerable shades, and lose the world
By not uniting : I astonish you :

These

These are harsh words for tender age like thine ;
But I address me to the kings and heroes
From whom you sprung, to all those demi-gods
Whom here you represent: too long trod down
Beneath a woman's feet their ashes lay,
Their glories she eclips'd, usurp'd their pow'r,
And fetter'd vanquish'd nations with her laws ;
But she is gone, and thou must now support
The building she had rais'd : she had thy beauty,
And thou must have her courage : let not love
Or folly wrest the sceptre from thy hand,
But grasp it close : you will not sacrifice
To a Sarmatian's idle passion for you
The name you ought to honour, and the throne
You shou'd ascend of universal empire.

A Z E M A.

Let not Arfaces be the theme, my lord,
Of your reproaches, but depend on me
To vindicate the honour of my race,
And to defend, whene'er occasion calls,
The rights of my lov'd ancestors ; I know
Their worth and virtues, but I know not one
Amongst the heroes which Assyria boasts
More great, more virtuous, more belov'd, than him,
Than this Sarmatian, whom you thus disdain.

Do

Do justice to his merit : for myself,
When I shall bend to Hymen's laws, the queen
Must guide my choice, and at her hands alone
Will I receive a master : for the croud,
The babbling eccho of one secret voice,
I heed it not ; nor know I if the people
Are tir'd of their obedience to a woman,
But still I see them bow the knee before her ;
And if they murmur, murmur in the dust :
The hand of heav'n, they say, is rais'd against her :
I am a stranger to her guilt, but think
That heav'n wou'd never have made choice of thee
To tell its high commands, or minister
Its justice to mankind : Semiramis
Is still a queen, and you who lord it here
Receive from her the laws which you dispense :
For me, I own her pow'r, and her's alone :
My glory's to obey, be thine the fame.

S C E N E IV.

ASSUR, CEDAR.

Obey ! I blush to think how long already
I have obey'd : O insupportable !
But say, hast thou succeeded, are the seeds
Of hatred sown in secret thro' the realm ?

Will they spring up into a fruitful harvest
Of discord, and rebellion?

CEDAR.

All is well:

The people, long deluded by the arts
And dazzling glory of Semiramis,
At length have lost their idle veneration:
No longer chain'd to silence, they demand
A successor: each lover of his country
Calls for a master, and looks up to thee.

ASSUR.

Heart-burning care! and ever-during shame!
Still must my hopes, my fate depend on her?
Was it for this that Ninus and his son
Fell by my hand, that Assur might be still
Only her first of slaves? So near the throne,
To languish in illustrious servitude,
And only be the second of mankind!
The queen was satisfy'd with Ninus' death,
But I went further, and pursued my blow:
Ninias, in secret murder'd by my order,
Open'd my passage to the throne; but she
Deny'd me entrance.—A long time in vain
I sooth'd her pride with flatt'ry on her charms;

Still

Still hoped one day to gain upon her youth
That happy influence which assiduous care
And humble adoration seldom fail
To win o'er artless minds that bend with ease:
I little knew the firmness of her soul,
Inflexible, and bold; the world alone
Cou'd satisfy her pride: she seem'd indeed
Most worthy of it: spite of my resentment,
I own she was, and yield the praise she merits.
'The reins of empire, that flow'd loose before,
Strongly she held; appeas'd the murm'ring croud,
Silenc'd their complaints, and quash'd conspiring rebels;
Fought like a hero, like a monarch rul'd:
She led her army and her people captive,
And spite of fame, with more than magic art,
Chain'd down the minds of men: the universe
Astonish'd stood, and trembled at her feet.
I thought, her beauty, woman's best support,
Strengthen'd the laws which pow'r and valour made;
And when I strove to raise conspiracies
My friends stood mute, and only cou'd admire her.
At length the charm is broke: her pow'r decays;
Her genius droops; remorse, and idle fears,
And fond credulity have bound her faith
To lying oracles, which knavish priests

Had

Had taught to speak in Ægypt's barren plain :
 She pours her daily incense at their altars,
 And wearies heav'n with vows : Semiramis
 Creeps on a level now with common mortals,
 And condescends to fear : I know her weakness :
 Know, till she falls, Assur can never rise :
 But I have rais'd the people's voice against her,
 And she must yield : this blow decides her fate :
 If she consents to give me Azema,
 She is no longer queen ; if she refuses,
 The kingdom will revolt : on every side
 The snare is laid, and nothing now can save her.
 Yet, after all, perhaps I am deceiv'd,
 And fortune, so long call'd for, comes at last
 But to betray me.

CEDAR.

If the queen is forc'd
 To name a successor, and yield the princess
 To Assur's bed, what can he have to fear,
 When the divided branch of Asia's kings
 Shall be united ? all conspires to pave
 Your way to empire.

ASSUR.

Azema is safe ;
 She must be mine ; but wherefore send so far
 For this Arfaces ? she supports him too ;

And when I wou'd chastise his insolence,
Her interposing hand prevents me still :
A minister without the pow'r, a prince
Without a subject, girt around with honours,
And yet a poor dependant, what is Assur?
All, all unite to persecute me now :
A peevish mistress, and a haughty rival,
Consulted priests that teach their gods to speak
Against me ; with Semiramis, who strives
To free herself, yet trembles at my presence :
But we shall see how far this proud ingrate
Will urge an angry rebel who defies her.

S C E N E V.

ASSUR, OTANES, CEDAR.

OTANES.

My lord, the queen commands you to attend her
In secret, and alone.

ASSUR.

I shall obey

Her sacred orders, and with care perform
My sov'reign's will.

S C E N E

S C E N E VI.

ASSUR, CEDAR.

ASSUR.

Whence springs this sudden change?

These three months past she has avoided me,
Ev'n as the object of her hatred: oft
When she beheld me she wou'd cast her eyes
Down on the earth, as if she loath'd the sight:
Whene'er we met, 'twas in a gaping croud
Of hearers; when she spoke, her sighs and tears
Wou'd interrupt our converse, or perchance.
Silence was all the answer she wou'd give me.
What can she want? What can she say to me?
But here she comes: 'tis she—wait you within.

[to Cedar.

S C E N E VII.

SEMIRAMIS, ASSUR.

SEMIRAMIS.

My lord, I come to ease a troubled heart
Of its long hidden woes, and pour it all
Before you: I have ruled o'er Asia long,
And not inglorious: Babylon perhaps
May pay this tribute to my memory,
And say, Semiramis deserv'd to rank

Among the greatest of her kings : thy hands
 Have help'd me to support the weight of empire ;
 With absolute dominion have I ruled,
 Ador'd by all, and crown'd with victory
 On ev'ry side : intoxicated long
 With flatt'ry's pleasing incense, I forgot
 The crimes that rais'd me to this envy'd state ;
 Forgot the justice of high heav'n : it comes ;
 It speaks to me : Semiramis must yield :
 This noble structure, which I fondly thought
 Superior to the injuries of time,
 Is tott'ring now, and shakes from its foundation ;
 Means must be found to strengthen and support it.

ASSUR.

The work is yours, and you must finish it :
 Foresee th'attacks of time, and stop his rapine :
 Who shall obscure the lustre of thy days,
 Or wherefore fear'st thou heav'n whilst earth obeys
 thee ?

SEMIRAMIS.

Yonder the ashes of my husband lie ;
 Can'st thou look there, and wonder at my fears ?

ASSUR.

I cannot bear to hear the noisy croud
 Still talk of Ninus : wherefore shou'd remembrance

Call back the thoughts of that inglorious reign ?
Can they believe, that, after fifteen years,
His angry spirit still calls out for justice ?
E'er now he wou'd have ta'en due vengeance on us,
Had he the pow'r : why from the peaceful realms
Of dark oblivion woud'st thou call the dead,
Or search for truth in lying oracles ?
I am astonish'd too, but 'tis at thee,
And thy vain fears : to make the gods propitious,
We must be resolute : this idle phantom,
At once the child and parent of your fears,
Why shou'd it thus alarm you ? Prodigies
Never appear to those who dread them not :
Baits to allure th' unthinking multitude,
By knaves invented, and by fools believ'd ;
The great despise them : but if nobler views
Inspire thy soul t' immortalize the blood
Of Belus, if the beauteous Azema
Claims her high rank. —

S E M I R A M I S.

Assur, on that I came
To speak with thee : our Babylon demands,
For such is Ammon's will, a successor :
Heav'n and my people will be satisfy'd

When I shall take a partner to my throne:
Thou know'st, my pride cou'd never condescend
To a divided sway; 'twas my resolve
To rule alone, whilst the impatient world
Urg'd me in vain; and when the peoples voice,
Which now is eccho'd by the voice of heav'n,
Still press'd me, in the bloom of youth, to give
A sov'reign to mankind, I still refus'd:
If I had yielded then to any claim,
It had been thine; you had a right to hope,
And to expect it; but you knew too well,
How much Semiramis abhorr'd a master.
Without submitting to a tie so fatal,
I made thee then the second of mankind,
And only not my equal; 'twas enough,
I thought, to satisfy ev'n thy ambition.
At length the gods make known their will divine,
And I obey them: hear the oracle:
" All shall again be well at Babylon,
" When Hymen's torch a second time shall blaze
" Propitious; then shalt thou, O cruel wife,
" And wretched mother, then shall thou appease
" The shade of Ninus." Thus the voice of heav'n
Declares its sacred will: I know thy arts,
Know, thou hast form'd a party in the state,

And

And mean t'oppose me with the royal blood
From whence you sprung: from thee and Azema
My successor, it seems, must rise; I know
You look that way, and she perhaps aspires
To equal honours; but, observe me well:
I shall not suffer your united claims
To rob me of my right: remember, Sir,
You know my will; 'tis constant, and as fate
Irrevocable: think'st thou now the God
Whose arm is lifted o'er me hath depriv'd
My soul of all its wanted strength and spirit,
Or dost thou still behold Semiramis,
Who can support the honour of her throne?
Know, Babylon e'er long shall at my hands
Receive a master: whether the high choice
Shall fall on thee, or be another's lot,
I'll take a sov'reign as a sov'reign ought:
Bring me the magi and the princes here
To join their voices with Semiramis,
To give away my freedom and my empire
Is the first greatest act of royal pow'r,
And therefore let it be perform'd with awe
And silence due to my authority.
Heav'n hath appointed this great day to shew
Its mercy to me, and the gods at length.

Remit their anger ; nothing can disarm it
 But my repentance ; 'tis the only virtue :
 Trust me, it is, howe'er you may despise it,
 Remaining for the guilty : weak, I know,
 And fearful thou esteem'st me ; but henceforth
 Remember, Assur, guilt alone is weakness :
 Think not that fear can e'er disgrace a throne,
 It has done good to kings, and might to thee :
 I tell thee, statesman, to obey the gods,
 * And tremble at their pow'r, is no abasement.

S C E N E VIII.

ASSUR alone.

Astonishment ! such language, such designs !
 Or is it artifice, or weakness in her,
 Or cowardice or courage ? Does she mean,
 By yielding thus, to prop her tott'ring pow'r,
 And by our union to defeat my purpose ?
 I must not think, it seems, of Azema,

* The enormous length of this speech, is a sufficient proof of what Mr. Voltaire has advanc'd in the preface, viz. that most of the French tragedies are nothing but long discourses : this consists of no less than sixty-four lines, and is enough to tire the pipe of the most long-winded actor. Semiramis, however, has beauties, which few of them have, to make amends for the tediousness of declamation, which in other writers, and even sometimes in Voltaire, is insupportable.

Because, perhaps, I'm destin'd for herself.
 It must be so. What all my cares in vain
 Solicited, my flatt'ry of her charms,
 My deep intrigues, and our united crimes,
 With all her fears, cou'd never gain, at length
 An idle dream, and a dark oracle
 From Ægypt have perform'd. What pow'r unknown
 Decrees the fate of mortals? Great events
 Hang on the slend'rest thread: still I am doubtful:
 I'll see Semiramis again; she seem'd
 Too much in haste; such sudden resolutions
 Betray an over anxious mind, and those
 Who change with ease are either weak, or wicked.

END of the SECOND ACT.

ACT III. SCENE I.

SEMIRAMIS, OTANES.

The scene represents an apartment in the palace.

SEMIRAMIS.

Who wou'd have thought, Otanes, that the gods,
 Offended as they were, at length shou'd smile
 Propitious thus, and threaten but to save!
 Shou'd drop th'uplifted thunder from their hand,
 And pardon me; shou'd send Arfaces hither

To change my fate ! for know it is their will
That I shou'd wed, and by a second tie
Expiate the crimes of my first fatal nuptials.
They are the great disposers of our hearts,
And mine with pleasure yields to their decrees :
It ev'n outruns their purposes : Arfaces,
I'm thine ; for thou wert born to rule o'er me,
And o'er the world.

O T A N E S.

Arfaces ! he !

S E M I R A M I S.

Thou know'st,

In Scythia's plains, when I reveng'd the Persian,
And conquer'd Asia, this young hero fought
Beneath his father's banners, and, surrounded
With captives, brought to me the bloody spoils,
And, blushing, laid his victims at my feet.
When first I saw him, I cou'd feel his heart,
As by some secret pow'r, attracting mine
Insensibly towards him ; all mankind,
Beside Arfaces, seem'd not worth my notice.
Assur grew jealous of him, and e'er since
Has fir'd with indignation at his name ;
Whilst his dear image still employ'd my thoughts,
Before that voice which guides my ev'ry word

And

And ev'ry action named him for my husband,
Before the gods had pointed out Arfaces.

O T A N E S .

It was indeed a noble conquest, thus
To bend that haughty spirit which disdain'd
The proffer'd homage of our eastern monarchs,
Who as her subjects, not as lovers, still
Accepted kings ! You who condemn'd those charms,
That sov'reign beauty, which extended wide
Your universal empire ; whilst your eyes
Pierc'd ev'ry heart, you scarce wou'd condescend
To mark their pow'r ; and dost thou yield at last
To love's imperious sway ; to fears and horror
Succeed the tender passions ? Can it be ?

S E M I R A M I S .

O, no : it is not love : I am not fall'n
So much beneath myself, as to bestow
On beauty the reward that's due to virtue ;
I feel a nobler passion in my breast :
Alas ! such weakness wou'd but ill become
Semiramis : unhappy as I am,
For me to think of love, Otanes, how
Coud'st thou suppose it ? Once I was a mother,
But scarce had study'd to deserve the name
By my fond cares, when heav'n in anger snatch'd

My

My child away, and left me here alone
A prey to anguish. I had nothing near me
That I cou'd love ; and, midst my grandeur, felt
An aching void within my soul. I fled
The court, endeavour'd to avoid myself,
And sought relief in these proud monuments,
Amusing flatt'ers of a restless heart
That shunn'd reflection : rest was still a stranger,
And long remain'd so ; but he comes once more,
I feel him now, and wonder at the pow'r
That charm'd him hither : 'twas Arsaces ; he
Shall hold the place of husband and of son,
A conquer'd world, and all my glories past.
How much I owe to thee, coelestial pow'r,
Who thus propitious lead'st me to the altar
So long abhorr'd ; and hast thyself inspir'd
That passion which alone can make me happy !

O T A N E S.

But what will be the rage and grief of Assur ?
Hast thou reflected on it, when he hears
Thy new resolves ? He is not without hopes :
The people have already fix'd thy choice
On him, and his resentment will not end
In mere complaints.

S E M I-

SEMIRAMIS.

I never have deceiv'd,

And therefore fear him not : these fifteen years,
Whate'er his views have been, I've taught him still
To rank but with my subjects, tho' the first
Amongst them ; and set bounds to his ambition,
Which he hath ne'er o'erleap'd : I reign'd alone ;
And if this feeble hand so long cou'd guide
The helm of pow'r, and curb his haughtiness,
What can his courage or his cunning do
Against Arfaces and Semiramis ?

Yes : Ninus hath accepted my repentance,
And leaves the mansions of the dead to urge
Our happy union : his illustrious shade
Again wou'd rage to see his murth'rer seize
His throne and bed : this calls him from the tomb,
And Ammon's oracles unite with him
To crown my bliss : no more the awful virtue
Of Oroes affrights me ; I've sent for him
To be a witness of the great event,
And soon expect him here.

OTANES.

His honour'd name
And sacred character may give indeed
A sanction to your choice.

S E M I.

SEMIRAMIS.

I know it will,

And 'tablish my resolves.

OTANES.

Behold, he comes.

S C E N E II.

SEMARIMIS, OROES.

SEMIRAMIS.

Great successor of Zoroastres, welcome :
 To day must Babylon receive a king ;
 Thy office is to crown him ; is all ready
 For the solemnity ?

OROES.

The magi wait

Thy pleasure, and the nobles all attend :
 To pay obedience to the sov'reign pow'r
 Is all my duty, and I shall fulfill it :
 I am not to judge kings, for that belongs
 To heav'n alone.

SEMIRAMIS.

By this mysterious language,
 It seems you disapprove my purpose.

OROES.

Madam,

I know it not, but wish it fair success.

S E M I-

SEMIRAMIS.

Thou can'st interpret heav'n's high will: these signs
Which I have seen, can they be fatal to me?
A spectre hath of late, perhaps some god,
Appear'd, and in the bosom of the earth
Re-enter'd soon: what pow'r hath thus broke down
Th' eternal barrier that divides the light
From darkness? wherefore shou'd a mortal thus
Rise from the tomb to visit me?

O R O E S.

Know, heav'n:

Doth oft suspend its own eternal laws
When justice bids, reversing death's decree;
Thus to chastise the sov'reigns of the earth,
And terrify mankind.

SEMIRAMIS.

The oracles

Demand a sacrifice.

O R O E S.

It shall be offer'd.

SEMIRAMIS.

Eternal justice, thou whose piercing eye
Behold'st my naked heart, O fill it not
Again with horror, bury in oblivion
My first unhappy nuptials!

Oroes,

Oroes, stay.

[To Oroes, who is retiring.

OROES.

[returning.

I thought my presence might disturb you, Madam.

SEMIRAMIS.

Return, and answer me: this morning, say,

Did not Arsaces offer at your altars

Gifts to the gods?

OROES.

He did; and precious were they:

Arsaces is the favourite of heav'n.

SEMIRAMIS.

I know he is, and I rejoice to hear it.

Can I be wretched if I trust to him?

OROES.

He is the empire's best support; the gods

Conducted him; his glory is their care.

SEMIRAMIS.

With transport I accept the fair presage,

Whilst hope and peace return to calm my breast.

Away: again let purest incense rise

Before your altars; let your magi come

And sanctify the choice; bring down the smiles

Of

Of the assenting gods, and make us happy.
Henceforth may Babylon with me revive,
And shine amongst the nations of the earth
With double splendor ! Go thou, and prepare
The solemn pomp.

S C E N E I I I .

S E M I R A M I S , O T A N E S .

S E M I R A M I S .

Heav'n seconds my design,

And I am only the interpreter
Of its high will, to give the world a master :
Thus to receive a kingdom at my hand
Will strike him with astonishment : ev'n now
How little thinks he of th' approaching greatness !
How will proud Assur and his fawning croud
Be humbled ! But a word, and the whole earth
Falls at his feet ; and, grateful as he is,
I know he will repay me : I shall wed him,
And for my portion carry him a world ;
My glory's pure, and now I shall enjoy it.

S C E N E

S C E N E IV.

SEMIRAMIS, OTANES, MITRANES.

An officer of the palace.

OTANES.

Arfaces begs admittance to your presence,
To lay his sorrows at your feet.

SEMIRAMIS.

Arfaces!

What sorrows can Arfaces feel when I
Am near him, he who thus hath banish'd mine?
Quick, let him come: he knows not yet his pow'r
O'er the fond heart of his Semiramis:
O thou dread shade whose voice alarm'd my soul,
Whose blood no more calls out for vengeance on me,
And you, the guardian gods of this great empire,
Of the Assyrians, Ninus, and my son,
Unite to bless Arfaces! Ha! the sight
Alarms me; whence can these strange terrors rise?

S C E N E V.

SEMIRAMIS, ARSACES.

O queen, I am devoted to thy service;
My life is thine; and when I shed this blood,
I am rewarded if it flows for thee.
My father had some small renown in arms;

I saw him perish bravely in the field,
And at the head of thy victorious bands ;
He left his hapless son a fair example,
Perhaps but ill pursued : I'll not recall
The mem'ry of my father's services,
'Twould ill become me ; at your royal knees,
Tho' here I sue for favor and protection :
Pity the rashness of a guilty youth,
Who listen'd to the dictates of imprudence,
And ev'n in serving fear'd he might offend you.

S E M I R A M I S.

Offend me ! thou, Arsaces ! fear it not.

A R S A C E S.

To day you give your kingdom and your hand :
My heart, I know, shou'd on the great event
Keep secret all its fears, and humbly still
In silence, with depending monarchs, wait
To know our master ; but this Assur steps
So haughtily, and triumphs in his conquest,
We cannot brook his pride : the people call him
Already their new sov'reign ; his high blood
And rank support him : may he prove himself
Worthy of both ! but I have still a soul
Too proud to bend beneath him, or adore

The

The pow'r I had defy'd : his jealous heart
 I know detests Arfaces : let me then
 Retire in safety, far from him, and thee :
 Permit me to revisit the dear climes
 Where first I serv'd my royal mistress, there
 His tyranny can never reach : perhaps
 I may hereafter—

SEMIRAMIS.

Wilt thou leave me then,
 And fear'st thou Assur ?

ARSACES.

No : Arfaces fears
 Nought but the anger of Semiramis.
 Perhaps thou know'st my fond ambition, then
 I've cause indeed to tremble.

SEMIRAMIS.

Hope the best,
 And know that Assur ne'er shall be thy master.

ARSACES.

I own it shock'd my soul to look on him
 As Ninus' successor : but is he then
 Design'd for Azema ? forgive this bold
 Presumptuous questioner : long since I know
 She was to Ninias giv'n, proud Assur sprung

From

From the same race, and claims her as his own :
I am but a poor subject, yet I dare ——

S E M I R A M I S.

Such subjects are my kingdom's best support ;
I know thee well ; thy noble soul, superior
To vulgar minds, hath sought Semiramis,
Not for her fortunes, but herself ; thy eyes
Are fix'd on her true int'rest, and on thee,
I shall depend : Assur and Azema
Shall never meet ; their union would be dang'rous :
But their designs are known, and by my care
Will be prevented.

A R S A C E S.

Since my heart at length
Is open to thee, and thou hast discover'd ——

A Z E M A enters suddenly, and throws herself at the feet of
Semiramis.

O Queen, permit me thus ——

S E M I R A M I S.

Rise, Azema :

Where'er my choice may light, thou may'st depend
On my protection, and shalt find respect
Due to thy birth ; for, destin'd as thou wert
To be the wife of my lamented son,
I look upon thee with a mother's eye :

[To

[To them both.

Go, place yourselves with those whom I have call'd
To witness my resolves, and mark my choice.

[To Arfaces.

Be thou, my best protector, near the throne.

S C E N E VI.

The apartment of Semiramis opens into a magnificent saloon richly ornamented ; a number of officers in their proper habits on the steps of the throne, which is rais'd in the middle ; the satraps on each side : the high-priest enters with the magi, and places himself between Assur and Arfaces : the queen in the midst with Azema, and her attendants : guards at the lower end of the saloon.

O R O E S.

Ye princes, magi, warriors, the support
Of Babylon, assembled by command
From great Semiramis, the will of heav'n
Soon shall ye know : the gods that guard our empire
Have fix'd on this important hour to work
A great and mighty change ; whoe'er the queen
Shall here appoint her sov'reign and our own
It is our duty to obey ; and here
I bring my tribute to the throne, my pray'rs

And

And wishes for the glory and the welfare
Of them, and of their kingdom : may these days
Of joy and gladness ne'er be chang'd to hours
Of grief and sorrow, nor these songs of mirth
To mournful plaints !

A Z E M A.

A king, my lords, will soon
Be named ; whoe'er he be, the choice will injure
Myself alone ; but Azema was born
And must remain a subject ; I submit
To the queen's pleasure, and on her protection
Shall still depend ; nor with the dark presage
Of future ills shall interrupt your joy :
But leave you my example of obedience.

A S S U R.

Howe'er the queen may choose, and heav'n determine,
We must consult the public good alone ;
Let us then swear by this imperial throne,
And great Semiramis, to yield submissive,
And without murm'ring, to obey her will.

A R S A C E S.

I swear it ; and this arm that fought for her,
This heart obedient ever to her voice,
Which next the voice of heav'n I still rever'd,

This

This blood, which flow'd with pleasure for her sake,
 Shall be devoted to that royal master
 Whom she appoints.

HIGH-PRIEST.

I wait the great award
 Of heaven and Semiramis.

SEMIRAMIS.

Enough :

Each to his place, and now attend, my people.

(She seats herself on the throne.)

Azema, Assur, the High-Priest, and Arfaces take their places,
 and she proceeds.

If in that hand which custom and the laws
 Of an imperious husband had confin'd
 To homely cares, and to a distaff chain'd,
 I bore aloft the sceptre and the sword,
 Beyond my subjects hope, nor sunk beneath
 The weight of empire, let me now extend
 To latest times its glory : 'tis my purpose
 This day to take a partner in the throne :
 The gods must be obey'd, whose dread command
 At length subdued my long unconquer'd heart :
 They who depriv'd me of my son, perhaps
 May one day raise an heir to Babylon
 Worthy of empire, who shall follow me

Thro'

'Thro' all the thorny paths that I have trod,
Finish my work, and make my reign immortal.
I might have chose a sov'reign from the kings
That dwell around me, but they're all my foes,
Or tributary slaves : a foreign hand
Shall never wield this sceptre : my own subjects
Are better than the kings which they have conquer'd :
Belus was born a subject ; if he gain'd
The diadem, he ow'd it to the people,
And to himself : by rights like his I hold
The pow'r supreme ; and, mistress of a kingdom
Larger than his, have bent beneath my yoke
The nations of the East, which Belus ne'er
Had seen or heard of : what he but attempted
Semiramis perform'd ; for they who found
A kingdom, and they only, can preserve it.
You want a king who may be worthy of you,
Worthy of such an empire, shall I add
Worthy the hand that crowns him, and the heart
Which I shall give : I have consulted heav'n,
My country's weal, the int'rest of mankind,
And choose a king to make the world more happy.
Adore the hero, see in him reviv'd
The princes of my honour'd race ; observe him,

And know, this king, this hero, is — Arfaces.

[She descends from the throne, and they all rise.

AZEMA.

Arfaces! the perfidious —

ASSUR.

Rage and vengeance!

ARSACES.

Believe me, Azema —

OROES.

Just heav'n! avert

These omens!

SEMIRAMIS.

Thou who sanctify'st my choice,

Confirm it at the altar: see in him

Ninus and Ninias both restor'd.

[It thunders, and the tomb shakes.

O heav'n!

What do I hear?

OROES.

Great gods, protect us now!

SEMIRAMIS.

The thunder comes, in anger or in love

I know not: pardon, gracious gods! Arfaces

Must win them to forgiveness. Ha! what voice

Distracts

Distracts me thus? and see, the tomb is open.
O heav'n! I die.

[The ghost of Ninus comes out of the tomb.

ASSUR.

The shade of Ninus' self.

Gods! is it possible?

ARSACES.

What say'st thou? speak,

Thou god of terrors.

ASSUR.

O unfold thy tale.

SEMIRAMIS.

Com'st thou to pardon, or to punish me?

It is thy sceptre and thy bed which here

I have bestow'd: speak, is he worthy of it?

Determine: I obey thee.

The GHOST of NINUS to ARSACES.

Thou shalt reign,

Arsaces, but there are some dreadful crimes

Which thou must expiate: hie thee to the tomb,

And to my ashes offer sacrifice:

Serve me and Ninias: remember well

Thy father: listen to the pontiff.

ARSACES.

O!

Thou venerable shade, thou demi-god,
 Who dwell'ft within these walls, the sight of thee
 Inspires but not astonishes Arsaces :
 Yes, I will go, on peril of my life,
 And meet thee in the tomb : but tell me, what
 Must be the sacrifice ? O speak ! he's gone.

[The ghost retires towards the entrance of the mausoleum.

SEMIRAMIS.

Thou honour'd spirit of my lord, permit me
 Thus on my knees to pour my sorrows forth,
 Permit me in the tomb to ——

GHOST, at the entrance of the tomb.

Stop : no farther :

Respect my ashes : when the time is come
 I'll send for thee.

[The ghost goes into the tomb, and the mausoleum closes.

ASSUR.

Amazing !

SEMIRAMIS.

Follow me,
 My people, to the temple : be not thus
 Dissent : for know, the gentle shade of Ninus

Is

Is not implacable ; it loves your king,
And therefore will it spare Semiramis :
Heav'n that inspir'd my choice will now support it :
Haste then, and pray for me, and for Arsaces.

END of the THIRD ACT.

A C T IV. S C E N E I.

Representing the porch of the temple.

ARSACES, AZEMA.

ARSACES.

DO not oppress me in this hour of grief,
And aggravate my sorrows ; I have borne
Enough already : this dread oracle
Affrights me ; prodigies on ev'ry side
Disturb the course of nature : heav'n deprives me
Of all, if Azema is lost.

AZEMA.

No more,
False man, nor to the horrors of this day
Add the remembrance of thy perfidy ;
No more the terrors of Semiramis,

The walking spectre, and the opening grave,
 Appall me now ; of all the prodigies
 Which I have seen, thy base inconstancy
 Hath shock'd me most : go on, appease the shade
 Of Ninus, and begin the sacrifice
 With Azema ; behold, and strike the victim.

ARSACES.

It is too much ; my heart was not prepar'd
 Against this cruel stroke : thou know'st, my soul
 Prefers thee to the empire of the world :
 What was the object of that fame in arms
 I held so dear, of all my victories ?
 All my ambition hoped for was at last
 To merit thee : Semiramis, thou know'st,
 Was dear to both ; thy tongue unites with mine
 To praise her ; she was still the guardian god
 That cherish'd and protected us ; as such
 We both revered her with that pious zeal
 And chaste regard which mortals bear to heav'n :
 Judge of my spotless faith by my surprise
 At the queen's choice, and mark the precipice
 It leads us to, thence learn our future fate.

AZEMA.

I know it.

ARSACES.

ARSACES.

Learn, that neither thou nor empire
Were destin'd for Arsaces; know, that son
Whom I must serve, the child of Ninus, he
Who must inherit here——

AZEMA.

Well; what of him?

ARSACES.

That Ninias, he who from his cradle lit
The torch of Hymen with thee, who was born
My rival and my master——

AZEMA.

Ninias!

ARSACES.

Lives;

And will be with us soon.

AZEMA.

Ha! then the queen ——

ARSACES.

Ev'n to this day deceiv'd, laments his death.

AZEMA.

Ninias alive!

F 4

ARSACES.

ARSACES.

It is a secret yet
Within the temple, and she knows it not.

AZEMA.

But Ninias crowns thee, and his widow's thine.

ARSACES.

Ay, but his son was born for Azema ;
He is my king, so says the oracle,
And I must serve him.

AZEMA.

But love claims his own,
And will be heard in spite of all, Arsaces :
His orders are not doubtful, or obscure.
Love is my oracle, and that alone
Shall be obey'd. Ninias, thou say'st, yet lives,
Let him appear, and let Semiramis
Recall her plighted faith to him ; let Ninus
Rise from the tomb, to join the fatal knot
Made in our infant years ; let Ninias come,
My king, thy master, and thy rival, fired
With all the love which once Arsaces had
For Azema, then see how I will flight
His proffer'd vows ; then shalt thou see me scorn

The

The sceptre at my feet, and spurn a crown
Which is my due: where is he now? What secret,
What myst'ry veils him from us? Let him come;
But know, nor Ninias, nor Semiramis,
No, nor the sacred spirit of his father
Ris'n from the tomb, nor all the pow'rs of nature
Thrown in confusion, from my heart shou'd wrest
The image of my perjur'd dear Arsaces:
Go, ask thy own, if it will dare to act
As mine hath done. What are those dreadful crimes
Which thou must expiate? if thou e'er shou'dst break
The sacred tie that binds us, if thou'rt false,
I know no crime, no treach'ry like thy own.

I see the sage interpreter of fate
This way advancing; love will never plead
Thy cause with heav'n, if thou betray'st me: go,
From Ninus' hand receive thy doom; remember,
Thy fate depends on heav'n, and mine on thee.

[Exit Azema.]

ARSACES.

Arsaces still is thine: stay, cruel maid:
How mingled is our happiness and woe!
What strange events that contradict each other —

S C E N E II.

ARSACES; OROES, the magi attending.

OROES.

[To Arsaces.

Let us retire to yonder lonely walk ;
I see you are much mov'd : prepare yourself
For strokes more dreadful.

[To the magi.

Bring the royal wreath.

[The magi bring the coffer.

This letter, and this sacred sword, to thee,
Arsaces, I deliver.

ARSACES.

Rev'rend father,

Wilt thou not save me from the precipice
That gapes before me ? wilt thou not at length
Uplift the veil, that from my eyes conceals
My future fate ?

OROES.

'Twill be remov'd, my son ;
The hour is come, when in his dreary mansions,
Ninus from thee expects a sacrifice
That shall appease his angry spirit.

ARSACES.

What

Can Ninus ask, what sacrifice from me ?

Must

Must I be his avenger, when his son
Still lives? Let Ninias come; he is my king,
And I will serve him.

OROEES.

'Tis his father's will,
Thou must obey him: an hour hence, Arsaces,
Be at his tomb, arm'd with this sacred sword,
And with this wreath adorn'd, which Ninus wore,
And which thy self did bring to me.

ARSACES.

The wreath
Of Ninus!

OROEES.

'Tis his royal will that thus
Thou shoud'st appear, to offer up the blood
That must be shed; the victim will be there:
Strike thou, and leave the rest to him, and heav'n.

ARSACES.

If he requires my life, I'll give it him:
But where is Ninias? thou speak'st nought of him:
Thou hast not told me how his father gives
To me his kingdom and his queen.

OROEES.

To thee
His queen! O heav'n, to thee Semiramis.

Be

Be giv'n ! Arfaces, the important hour
Which I had promis'd thee is come, when thou
Shalt know thy fate, and this abandon'd woman.

ARSACES.

Great gods !

OROEES.

'Twas she who murther'd Ninus.

ARSACES.

She,

Saidst thou, the queen ?

OROEES.

Affur, that foul disgrace
Of human nature, Affur gave the poison.

ARSACES.

I'm not surpris'd at Affur's cruelty,
But that a wife, a queen, and such a queen,
The pride of sov'reigns, the delight of nations,
That she shou'd e'er be guilty of a crime
So horrible ! it passes all belief.
How can such virtues and such guilt as hers
Subsist together !

OROEES.

How indeed ! the question
Is worthy of thy noble heart : but now

'Twere

'Twere needless to dissemble, ev'ry moment
Is big with some new secret, horrible
To nature, who already whispers to thee
Her soft complaints; thy gen'rous heart, I see,
Spite of thyself, is shock'd, and mourns within thee;
But wonder not that Ninus from the tomb
Indignant rises on this seat of guilt;
He comes to break the horrid nuptial tie,
Wov'n by the furies, and expose to light
Unpunish'd crimes; to save his son from incest:
He speaks to, he expects thee: know thy father,
For thou art Ninias, and the queen's thy mother.

A R S A C E S.

Thou hast o'er pow'rd me in one dreadful moment
With such repeated wonders, that I stand
Astonish'd, and the night of death surrounds me.
Am I his son, and can it be?

O R O E S.

Thou art:

Ninus, the morn before he dy'd, foresaw
His end approaching; knew the deadly draught
Which he had drank was minister'd to thee
By the same hand, and, dying as thou wert,
Withdrew thee from this wicked court: for Assur
Had poison'd thee that he might wed thy mother,
Thought

Thought to exterminate the royal race,
 And open thus his passage to the throne :
 But whilst the kingdom mourn'd thy loss, Phradates,
 Our faithful friend, secreted and preserv'd thee ;
 With skilful hand the precious herbs prepar'd,
 O'er Persia spread by her benignant God,
 Whose wond'rous pow'r drew forth the latent venom
 From thy parch'd limbs : his own son dying, you
 Supply'd his place, and still wert call'd Arsaces.
 He waited patient for some lucky change,
 But the great judge of kings had otherwise
 Determin'd ; truth at length descends from heav'n,
 And vengeance rises from the tomb.

ARSACES.

O God !

Enough already hast thou try'd thy servant,
 Or must I yield that life which you restor'd ?
 Yes : I was born midst grandeur, shame, and horror :
 My mother — Ninus ! O what deadly purpose —
 But if the traitor Assur was alone
 To blame, if he ———

OR OES. [Giving him the letter.

Behold this paper here.

Too faithful witness of her guilt, then say
 If yet a doubt remains.

ARSACES.

ARSACES.

Haste, give it me,

And clear them all.

[He reads.

Ha! "*Ninus to Phradates :*

" *I die by poison, guard my Ninias well,*

" *Defend him from his foes : my guilty wife ———*

O R O E S.

Need'st thou more proof? this witness came from
thee.

He had not finish'd; death, thou see'st, broke off
Th'imperfect scroll, and stopp'd his feeble hand;
Phradates hath unfolded all the rest,
Read this, and learn the whole.

[Gives him another paper.

It is enough

That Ninus hath commanded thee, he guides
Thy steps, and leads thee to the throne, but says
He must have blood.

ARSACES. [after reading the paper.

O day of miracles,
And you ye dreadful oracles from hell,
Dark as the tomb which I must visit, how

Shall

Shall I unveil your secret purposes,
When he who is to make the sacrifice
Knows not his victim ! Who shall guide my choice ?
I tremble at it.

OROEES.

Tremble for the guilty.

Amidst the horrors that oppress thy soul,
The gods will guide thee ; deem not thou thyself
A common mortal, from the race of men
Thou art distinguish'd, set apart by heav'n,
And noted by its signature divine.
Walk thou secure, tho' night conceals thy fate,
The gods of thy great ancestors employ thee
But as their instrument, what right hast thou
To litigate their pow'r, and to oppose
Thy masters ? Sav'd from death, as thou hast been,
Be thankful still ; complain not, but adore.

SCENE III.

ARSACES, MITRANES.

ARSACES.

I cannot reconcile this strange event :
Semiramis my mother ! can it be ?

MITRANES.

MITRANES.

[entering in haste.]

My lord, the people in this hour of terror
Demand their king : permit me first to hail thee
The husband of Semiramis, and lord
Of Babylon : the queen is hasting hither
In search of thee ; I bless the happy hour
That gave her to thee : ha ! not answer me !
Despair is in thy looks, thy lips are clos'd
In dreadful silence, thou art pale with terror,
And thy whole frame's disorder'd : what has pass'd ?
What have they said ?

ARSACES.

I'll fly to Azema.

MITRANES.

Amazing ! can it be Arsaces ? fly
A queen's embraces ; scorn her proffer'd love ;
Insult her choice ; the royal hand that spurn'd
Kings for thy sake ! thus are her hopes betray'd ?

ARSACES.

Gods ! 'tis Semiramis herself ; O Ninus,
Now let thy tomb in its dark bosom hide
Her crimes, and me !

SCENE

SCENE IV.

SEMIRAMIS, ARSACES.

SEMIRAMIS.

Arsaces, all is ready,
We want but thee, great master of the world,
Whose fate, like mine, depends on thee ; O haste,
And make our bliss complete ! with joy I see
Thy brows encircled with that sacred wreath :
The priest, I know, was by the gods commanded
To crown thee with it ; heav'n and hell at once
Approve my choice, and by these signs confirm it :
Assur's seditious party, struck with awe
And holy rev'rence, tremble at my presence ;
Ninus, at length propitious, hath requir'd
A sacrifice, O haste, and give it him,
That we may soon be blest : the people's hearts
Are all with us, and Assur's threats are vain.

ARSACES.

[walking about with great emotion.
Assur ! away ! in his perfidious blood
The parricide—we will revenge thee, Ninus.

SEMIRAMIS.

What do I hear ? just heav'n ! speak'st thou of him,
Of Ninus ?

ARSACES.

A R S A C E S.

[wildly.]

Said'st thou not, his guilty hand

(coming to himself.)

Had shed—to arm against his queen ! the slave,
That was enough to make me hate him.

S E M I R A M I S.

Haste then,

Receive my hand, and thus begin thy vengeance.

A R S A C E S.

My father !

S E M I R A M I S.

Ha ! what looks are those, Arsaces ?

Is this the soft submissive tender heart
Which I expected from thee, when I gave
My willing hand ? That fearful prodigies,
And spectres rising from their dark domain,
Shou'd leave the marks of horror on thy soul,
Alarms me not, I feel them too, but less
When I behold Arsaces : do not thus
O'erspread this fairest dawn of happiness
With sorrow's gloomy shade, but still appear
Such as thou wert when trembling at my feet,
Least Assur e'er shou'd be thy master ; fear
Nor him, nor Ninus and his angry shade ;

My

My dear Arfaces, thou art my support,
My lord, my husband.

ARSACES.

[turning aside from her,

'Tis too much, O stop :

Her guilt o'erwhelms me.

SEMIRAMIS..

How his soul's disturb'd !

Alas ! he wants that peace which he bestow'd
On me.

ARSACES..

Semiramis ——

SEMIRAMIS.

What woud'st thou ? speak.

ARSACES.

I cannot: leave me, leave me : hence ! begone.

SEMIRAMIS.

Amazing ! leave thee ! can I e'er forsake
Arfaces ? O explain this myst'ry to me,
And ease my tortur'd soul : it makes us both
Unhappy : — ha ! despair is in thy aspect ;
Thou chill'st my veins with horror, and thy eyes
Are dreadful ; they affright me more than heav'n
And hell united to oppose my vows :
Scarce can my trembling lips pronounce, I love thee :

Some

Some pow'r invifible now leads me on
Towards thee, now withholds me from thy arms,
And mingles, how I know not, tend'reft love
With sentiments of horror and despair.

ARSACES.

Hate me, abhor me.

SEMIRAMIS.

Can'ft thou bid me hate thee?

Cruel Arfaces, No: I ftill muft trace
Thy footfteps, ftill my heart muft follow thine:
What is that paper which thou look'ft on thus
With horror, whilft thy eyes are bath'd in tears,
Does that contain a reason for thy coldnefs?

ARSACES.

It does.

SEMIRAMIS.

Then give it me.

ARSACES.

I muft not: dar'ft thou—

SEMIRAMIS.

I'll have it.

ARSACES.

Leave to me that dreadful fcroll,
To thee 'twere fatal, I have ufe for it.

SEMIRAMIS.

Whence came it?

ARSACES.

SEMIRAMIS.

ARSACES.

From the gods.

SEMIRAMIS.

And wrote by whom?

ARSACES.

Wrote by my father.

SEMIRAMIS.

Ha! what say'st thou?

ARSACES.

Tremble.

SEMIRAMIS.

Give it me, let me know at once my fate.

ARSACES.

Urge it no more; there's death in ev'ry line.

SEMIRAMIS.

No matter: clear my doubts, or I shall think
That thou art guilty.

ARSACES.

Ye immortal pow'rs
That guide our steps, it is to your decrees
That I submit.

SEMIRAMIS.

For the last time, Arsaces,
I here command thee, listen, and obey.

ARSACES.

ARSACES, [giving her the letter.

O may thy justice, heav'n, be satisfy'd !

And this the only punishment that e'er

Shall be inflicted on her ! now 'tis past,

And thou wilt know too much.

[She reads.

SEMIRAMIS.

[to Otanes.

What do I read ?

Support me, or I die.

[She faints.

ARSACES.

She sees it all.

SEMIRAMIS, [coming to herself, after a long silence,

Delay not, but fulfil thy destiny :

Punish this guilty, this unhappy wretch,

And in my blood wash out the deadly stain.

Nature deceiv'd is horrible to both,

Revenge thy father, strike, and punish me.

ARSACES.

No : let the sacred character I bear,

The name of son, preserve me from that crime !

Much rather wou'd I pierce the heart of him

Who still reveres thee, the poor lost Arsaces.

SEMIRAMIS.

[kneeling.

Be cruel as Semiramis, she felt

No pity, therefore be the son of Ninus,

And take my life : thou wilt not ; nay, thy tears

Ev'n

Ev'n mix with mine: O Ninias, 'tis a day
 Of horrors, yet there's pleasure in this pain.
 Before thou giv'st me what I have deserv'd,
 The stroke of death; let nature's voice be heard:
 O let a guilty mother's tears bedew
 That dear that fatal hand.

ARSACES.

I am thy son,
 'Tis not for thee, whate'er thy guilt, to fall
 Thus at my feet: O rise, thy Ninias begs,
 He loves thee still, still vows obedience to thee,
 Respect and purest love: consider me
 As a new subject, only more submissive,
 More humble, than the rest; I hope, more dear.
 Heav'n that restores thy son is sure pleas'd:
 The gods who pardon thee reserve their vengeance
 For Assur, leave him to his fate.

SEMIRAMIS.

Receive
 My crown and sceptre, I have much disgrac'd them.

ARSACES.

Still, I beseech you, hold me ignorant
 Of all, and let me with the world adore you.

SEMI

SEMIRAMIS.

O no: my guilt's too flagrant.

ARSACES.

But repentance

May blot it out.

SEMIRAMIS.

Ninus hath giv'n to thee

The reins of empire, thou must not offend

His vengeful spirit.

ARSACES.

O it will relent

At thy remorse, and soften at my tears.

Otanes, in the name of heav'n, preserve

My mother, and conceal the horrid secret.

END of the FOURTH ACT.

ACT V. SCENE I.

SEMIRAMIS, OTANES.

OTANES.

O 'Twas some god that smil'd propitious on thee,
Who thus prevented these abhorred nuptials;
Whilst nature shudder'd at th' approaching danger,
Gave thee a son, and sav'd thee thus from incest.

The oracles of Ammon, and the voice
 From hell, the shades of Ninus, all declar'd
 The day appointed for thy second marriage
 Shou'd end thy sorrows, but they never said
 That marriage e'er shou'd be accomplish'd : No:
 The nuptials were prepar'd : thou hast fulfill'd
 Thy destiny : thy son reveres thee still :
 Mild is the justice of offended heav'n,
 Which only asks a private sacrifice :
 This day Semiramis shall still be happy.

SEMIRAMIS.

Alas ! there is no happiness for me,
 Otanes : Ninias smiles indeed upon me :
 A mother's sorrows for a time will plead
 More strongly with him than the blood of Ninus,
 And my past crimes ; but soon his tenderness
 And filial love may change perhaps to wrath
 And fierce resentment for a murder'd father.

OTANES.

What fear'st thou from a son ? what dire presage—

SEMIRAMIS.

Fear is the nat'ral punishment of guilt,
 And still attends it : this detested Assur,
 Has he attempted aught, say, does he know
 What pass'd of late, and who Arfaces is ?

OROES.

O T A N E S.

The dreadful secret still remains unknown ;
The shade of Ninus is by all rever'd ;
But how to comprehend the oracle
They know not ; how they must avenge his ashes ;
How serve his son—the minds of men are struck
With wild astonishment, in silence now
They wait the hour when the self-open'd tomb
Shall banish all their fears, and make 'em happy.
Mean time the soldiers are in arms, the people
Croud to the altars ; wretched Azema,
Trembling and pale, with terror in her looks,
Walks round the tomb, and lifts her hands to heav'n ;
Whilst Ninias stands astonish'd in the temple,
Prepar'd to strike his victim yet unknown :
The gloomy Assur meditates revenge,
Unites the remnants of his scatter'd party,
And forms some dark design.

S E M I R A M I S.

I have kept fair
Too long already with him : seize the traitor,
Otanès, bear him to my son in chains ;
Ninias shall soon appease eternal justice,

At least with Affur's blood, my vile accomplice.
 Ninus, thou see'st I am a mother fill;
 Thou see'st my heart, O take it, take it all,
 And may it rise a grateful sacrifice!
 Ha! who approaches with such hasty steps?
 How ev'ry thing appalls my flutt'ring soul!

S C E N E II.

SEMIRAMIS, AZEMA, OTANES.

AZEMA.

O Queen, forgive me if I come uncall'd;
 But terrors worse than death have forc'd me thus
 To clasp thy knees, and beg thy royal mercy—

SEMIRAMIS.

What woud'st thou, princess? speak.

AZEMA.

To snatch a hero
 From instant danger, stop a traitor's hand,
 And save Arfaces.

SEMIRAMIS.

Ha! what hand? Arfaces!

AZEMA.

He is thy husband, Azema's betray'd,
 He lives for you alone; no matter—

SEMIRAMIS.

He

My husband! gods!

A Z E M A.

AZEMA.

The sacred tie that binds you—

SEMIRAMIS.

The tie is dreadful, impious, and abhorr'd :
 Arsaces is—but speak, go on ; I tremble :
 What dangers ? haste, and tell me.

AZEMA.

Well thou know'st,
 Perhaps this very moment, whilst I ask
 Thy aid, perhaps—

SEMIRAMIS.

Well, what ?

AZEMA

That demi-god
 Whom we adore demands the sacrifice
 Within the dreary lab'rins of the tomb :
 What are the crimes Arsaces must atone for
 I know not.

SEMIRAMIS.

Crimes ! just heav'n !

AZEMA.

But impious Assur
 Hath sworn to violate that sacred place
 Which mortals dare not enter.

SEMIRAMIS.

Ay ! indeed !

Hath Assur sworn it ?

G 3

AZEMA.

A Z E M A.

In the dead of night

The wily traitor had long since secur'd
A safe retreat, if e'er occasion call'd,
Within the secret windings of the tomb,
Where now he means to do the bloody deed,
To brave the pow'rs of hell, and wrath of heav'n;
With sacrilegious hand he wou'd destroy
The generous Arsaces.

S E M I R A M I S.

Heav'n! what say'st thou?

By what detested means?

A Z E M A.

Believe a heart

By love enlighten'd, and by love inspir'd:
I know the traitor's rank envenom'd hatred,
Mark'd how the trembling faction by his zeal
Reviv'd; I pry'd into their secret councils,
Pretended to unite his cause with mine,
And join our int'rests; I have look'd into him,
Have wrested from his heart the fatal secret.
Boldly he marches on, and hopes to pass
Unpunish'd: well he knows that none dare enter
That holy place, not Oroes himself:
Thither he's gone: mean time his slaves report
Arsaces is the victim that must die

For

For Babylon, and Ninus in his blood
 Shall satiate his revenge : the nobles meet,
 The people murmur ; Ninus, Assur, heav'n,
 Are all incens'd : I tremble for Arfaces.

S E M I R A M I S.

My dearest Azema, heav'n speaks by thee :
 It is enough : I see what must be done.
 Repose thyself with safety on a mother ;
 Daughter, our danger is the same ; go thou,
 Defend thy husband, I will save my son.

A Z E M A.

O heav'n !

S E M I R A M I S.

I meant to wed him, but the gods
 In mercy have forbid it : they inspire
 A hapless mother now : — but time is precious ;
 Go : leave me here, and in my name command
 The nobles, priests, and people, to attend me.

[Azema goes into the porch of the temple, and Semiramis
 advances towards the tomb.]

Thou shade of Ninus, lo ! I fly t'avenge thee ;
 The hour is come when thou didst promise me
 Admittance to thy tomb ; I have obey'd thee,
 Call'd by thy voice, behold me here to save
 My son. Ye guards that wait around my throne

Approach : henceforth Arfaces is your king ;
 No more obedient to Semiramis,
 Observe his laws, to him the sov'reign pow'r
 I here resign ; be you his subjects now,
 And his defenders.

[Guards appear, and range themselves on each side at the
 further part of the stage.

Gracious heav'n ! protect me.

[She goes into the tomb.

S C E N E III.

AZEMA.

[returning from the porch of the temple to the front of the stage.
 What can she purpose ? O it is too late
 To save him now ; I know not what to think :
 'Tis wond'rous all ; O 'tis a dreadful moment,
 Arfaces ! Ninias ! ye immortal pow'rs
 Who guide our fate, O say, did you restore
 My lov'd Arfaces but to snatch him from me ?

S C E N E IV.

AZEMA, NINIAS.

AZEMA.

Ha ! Ninias ! can it be ? Art thou indeed
 Great Ninus' son, my sov'reign, and my husband ?

O

NINIAS.

O! thou behold'st me, Azema, aſham'd
To know myſelf, ſprung from the blood of gods,
And ſhudd'ring at the thought: O! Azema,
Remove my terrors, calm my troubled ſoul,
Strengthen my arm uprais'd t'avenge a father.

AZEMA.

Take heed how thou perform'st that dreadful office.

NINIAS.

He hath commanded, and I muſt obey.

AZEMA.

Ninus wou'd never ſacrifice his ſon :
Impossible !

NINIAS.

What ſays my Azema ?

AZEMA.

Ne'er ſhalt thou enter that abhorred place,
For know, a traitor lies in wait for thee.

NINIAS.

Who ſhall withhold or terrify Arſaces ?

AZEMA.

Thou art the victim to be offer'd there :
With ſacrilegious ſteps the impious Aſſur

Profanes the sacred tomb, and rashly dares
 To violate its privilege divine :
 He waits thee there.

NINIAS.

Good heav'n ! then all is plain ;
 I'm satisfy'd : the victim is prepar'd ;
 My father, poison'd by the wicked Assur,
 Demands the traitor's blood : instructed thus
 By Oroes, and conducted by the gods,
 Arm'd by the hand of Ninus' self, I go
 To punish the Assaffin : thither led
 By heav'ns eternal justice, my weak hand
 Is but the instrument of pow'r divine :
 The gods do all, and my astonish'd soul
 Yields to that voice which must decree my fate :
 Spite of ourselves, our ways are noted down,
 Mark'd, and determin'd : prodigies are spread
 Around the throne, and spirits call'd from hell
 To wander here : but fearless I obey,
 Believe, and trust in heav'n.

AZEMA.

Whate'er the gods
 Have done but fills my soul with sad dismay :
 Ninus was lov'd by them ; yet Ninus perish'd.

NINIAS.

NINIAS.

But now they will avenge him : cease thy plaints.

A Z E M A.

Oft have they chose the purest victim, oft
Have shed the blood of innocence.

NINIAS.

No more ;

They will defend whom thus they have united :
They by a father's voice exhorted us,
Gave me a throne, a mother, and a wife.
Soon shalt thou see me sprinkled with the blood
Of the vile murth'rer ; from the tomb those gods
Shall lead me to the altar ; I obey ;
It is enough : the rest be left to heav'n.

S C E N E. V.

A Z E M A alone.

O guard his footsteps in this fatal tomb !
Ye pow'rs inscrutable, whose blood must flow
This day ? I tremble for th'event, and dread
The hand of Assur, long inur'd to slaughter ;
Ev'n on his father's ashes may he shed
The blood of Ninias : O may the dark womb
Of hell receive and swallow up his rage !
Ye light'nings blast him ! O illustrious shade

Of

Of Ninus, wherefore wou'd'st thou not permit
 A wretched wife to go with her dear lord ?
 O guide, support him in this place of darkneſs !
 Did I not hear the voice of Ninias mix'd
 With deadly groans ? O wou'd this ſacred tomb,
 Which I profane, but open to my wiſhes
 The gate of death ! — I will deſcend : — I go —
 Hark ! the earth ſhakes, and dreadful light'nings flaſh
 Athwart the ſkies : fear, hope, deſpair — he comes.

S C E N E VI.

NINIAS, a bloody ſword in his hand, AZEMA.

NINIAS.

O heav'n ! Where am I ?

AZEMA.

O ! my lord, you're pale,
 And bloody, froz'n with horror.

NINIAS.

'Tis the blood

Of the vile parricide : I wander'd down
 Ev'n to the bottom of the tomb ; my father
 Still led me onward thro' its winding paths,
 He walk'd before, and pointed out the place
 Of my revenge : there, by th' imperfect light
 That glimmer'd thro' the dreary vault, I ſaw,

Or

Or thought I saw, uprais'd, the murth'ers sword :
Methought he trembled ; guilt is ever fearful :
Twice did I plunge my sword into his heart,
And with my bloody arm, which rage had strengthen'd,
Had drag'd him in the dust towards the place
Whence the dim rays of light appear'd: and yet
I own to thee, his deep heart-rending sighs,
The mournful sounds, imperfect as they were,
That reach'd my ears, his humble vows to heav'n,
With that repentance which in his last hour
Seem'd to possess his soul, the hallow'd place,
The voice of pity, which, revenge once o'er,
Calls loudly on us, with I know not what
Of dark mysterious terror, shook my soul,
And made me leave the bleeding victim there.
What can this trouble, this strange horror mean
That dwells upon me, Azema ? My heart
Is pure, ye gods, my hands are innocent,
Stain'd only with the blood you bid me shed ;
I've serv'd the cause of heav'n, and yet am wretched.

A Z E M A.

The dead are satisfy'd, and nature too :
Come let us quit this horrid place, and seek
Thy mother, she shall calm thy troubled mind :
Since Assur is no more ———

S C E N E

S C E N E VII.

NINIAS, AZEMA, ASSUR.

[Assur appears at a distance with Otanes, surrounded by guards.

AZEMA.

O heav'n ! he's there.

NINIAS.

Assur !

AZEMA.

O haste, ye ministers of heav'n,
Ye servants of the king, defend your master.

S C E N E VIII.

OROES, the high-priest, with the magi and people assembled,
OTANES, NINIAS, AZEMA, MITRANES,
ASSUR difarm'd.

OTANES.

They need not : by the queen's command I've seiz'd
The traitor, who attempted to profane
Yon sacred monument, and enter there :
I shall deliver him to thee.

NINIAS.

Alas !

What victim then hath Ninias sacrific'd ?

OROES.

O R O E S.

Heav'n is pleas'd, and vengeance now complete.
Behold, ye people, your king's murderer.

[pointing to Assur.

Behold, ye people, your king's successor.

[pointing to Ninias.

'Tis Ninias, Babylon's lost prince, restor'd :
He is your sov'reign, know him, and obey.

A S S U R.

Thou Ninias !

O R O E S.

Ay ; 'tis he : the guardian god,
Who sav'd him from thy rage, hath brought him hither ;
That god whose vengeance hath o'ertaken thee.

A S S U R.

Ha ! did Semiramis then give thee life ?

N I N I A S.

She did, and pow'r withal to punish thee :
Guards take him hence, and rid me of a monster.
He was not worthy of my sword ; to fall
By Ninia's hand had been a death too glorious.
The victim hath escap'd me ; let him die,
Ev'n as he liv'd, with infamy : away.

A S S U R.

It is my heaviest punishment to see
Ninias my sovereign : but 'tis pleasure still

To

To leave thee more unhappy than myself ;

[Semiramis appears at the foot of the tomb, wounded,
and almost dead, one of the magi supporting her.

Look yonder, and behold what thou hast done.

[pointing to Semiramis.

NINIAS.

Whom have I slain ?

AZEMA.

Fly, my dear Ninias, fly

This fatal place.

MITRANES.

What hast thou done ?

OROES.

[placing himself between Ninias and the tomb.

Away ;

And cleanse those bloody hands : give me the sword,
That fatal instrument of wrath divine.

NINIAS.

No : let me plunge it to my heart.

[He attempts to destroy himself, the guards interpose.

OROES.

Disarm him.

SEMIRAMIS.

[Brought forward and seated on a sofa.

Revenge me, O my son : some base Assassin
Has slain thy mother.

Has

NINIAS.

O unhappy hour ;

Unheard of guilt ! for know, that base assassin,
That monster was — thy son : this hand hath pierc'd
The breast that nourish'd and supported me :
But soon thou shalt have vengeance, Ninias soon
Shall follow thee.

SEMIRAMIS.

I went into the tomb
To save thee, Ninias ; thy unhappy mother —
But from thy hands I have receiv'd the fate
I merited.

NINIAS.

This last, this fatal stroke,
Sinks deep into my soul : but here I call
Those gods to witness who conducted me,
Those who misl'd my steps —

SEMIRAMIS.

No more, my son :
Freely I pardon thee, and only make
This last request, that those dear hands may close
My dying eyes.

[He kneels.

A mother begs it of thee :
Thy heart I know was stranger to the deed :

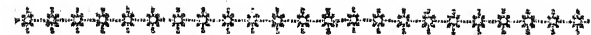
O

O wou'd that I had been as innocent
When Ninus dy'd ! but I have suffer'd for it.
Henceforth let mortals know, that there are crimes
Offended heaven never can forgive.
O Ninias, Azema, let your blest union
Blot out my crimes ; come near your dying mother ;
Give me your hands ; long may ye live and reign
In happiness ! that hope still gives me comfort,
And mingles joy ev'n with the pangs of death.
It comes, I feel it. O ! my children, think
On your Semiramis, O do not hate
My mem'ry, — O my son, my son — tis past.

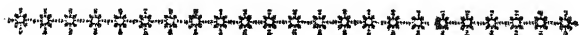
O R O E S.

Her eyes are sunk in darkness : help the king
And guard his life. Learn from her sad example,
That heav'n is witness to our secret crimes :
The higher is the criminal, remember,
The gods inflict the greater punishment ;
Kings, tremble on your thrones, and fear their justice.

END of the FIFTH and last ACT.



THE
D E A T H
OF
C Æ S A R.
A
T R A G E D Y.



A
L E T T E R
FROM
SIGNOR ALGAROTTI,
TO
SIGNOR FRANCHINI,
ENVOY at FLORENCE.

On the TRAGEDY of JULIUS CÆSAR, by
Mr. DE VOLTAIRE.

S I R,

I Have deferr'd sending you the Julius Cæsar, which you desir'd, till now, that I might have the pleasure of communicating to you the tragedy on that subject, as written by Mr. de Voltaire. The edition of it printed at Paris some months ago, is extremely faulty; one may easily perceive in it the hand of some of those gentlemen, whom Petronius calls Doctores Umbratici. It is even so shamefully defective, as to give us verses that have not the proper number of syllables.

lables. This piece, notwithstanding, has been as feverely criticis'd, as if Mr. de Voltaire himself had publish'd it: wou'd it not be cruelly unjust to impute to Titian, the bad colouring of one of his pictures, that had been dawb'd over by a modern painter? I have been fortunate enough to procure a manuscript fit to be sent to you: you will see the picture exactly as it came out of the hand of the master: I will even venture to accompany it with the remarks which you desired of me.

Not to know that there is a French language and a French theatre, cannot shew a greater degree of ignorance, than not to know to what perfection Corneille and Racine carry'd the drama. It seem'd, indeed, as if, after these great men, nothing remain'd to be wish'd for, and that all which cou'd be done, was to endeavour to imitate them. Cou'd one expect any thing in painting after the Galatæa of Raphael? and yet the famous head of Michael Angelo, in the little Farnese, gave us an idea of a species more fierce and terrible, to which this art might be rais'd. In the fine arts, we do not perceive the void till after it is fill'd up. Most of the tragedies of the great masters I just now mention'd, whether the scene lies at Rome, Athens,

or Constantinople, contain nothing more than a marriage concerted, or broken off: we can expect, indeed, nothing better in this species of tragedy, wherein love makes peace or war with a smile. I cannot help thinking but that the drama is capable of something infinitely superior to this. Julius Cæsar is to me a proof of it. The author of the tender Zara breaths nothing here but sentiments of ambition, liberty, and revenge.

Tragedy shou'd be an imitation of great men; it is that which distinguishes it from comedy: but if the actions which it represents are likewise great, the distinction is still better mark'd out, and by these means we may arrive at a nobler species. Do we not admire Mark Antony more at Philippi than at Actium? I am apprehensive, notwithstanding, that reasonings of this kind will meet with the strongest opposition. We must have very little acquaintance with human nature not to know, that prejudice generally gets the better of reason; and above all, those prejudices that are authoris'd by a sex that imposes laws upon us, which we always submit to with pleasure.

Love has been too long in possession of the French theatre, to suffer any other passions to supplant it, which inclines me to think, that Julius Cæsar will

meet

meet with the fate of Themistocles, Alcibiades, and many other great men of Athens, that of being admir'd by all mankind; whilst Ostracism banish'd them from their own country.

In some places Mr. de Voltaire has imitated Shakespear, an English poet, who united in the same piece the most childish absurdities and the finest strokes of the true sublime. He has made the same use of him as Virgil did of Ennius, and taken from him the two last scenes, which are, doubtless, the finest models of eloquence which the stage ever produced.

Quum flueret lutulentus, erat quod tollere velles.

What is it but the remains of barbarism in Europe, to endeavour to make those bounds which power and policy have prescribed to separate states and kingdoms, the limits also of science, and the fine arts, whose progress might be so widely extended by that commerce and mutual light which they wou'd throw on each other: a reflection which may be more serviceable to the French nation than any other, as it is exactly in the case of an author, from whom the public expect more in proportion to what they have already received from him. France is so highly polish'd and cultivated, that we have a right to demand of her,

not

not only that she shou'd approve, but that she shou'd adopt and enrich herself with every thing that is excellent amongst her neighbours :

Tros Rutulufve fuat, nullo discrimine habeto.

There is one objection to this tragedy, which I shou'd not have mentioned to you, but that I heard it made by many, that it has but three acts: this, say the critics, is against all the rules of the stage, which require that there shou'd be exactly five. It is certainly one of the first rules of the drama, that the representation shou'd not take up more time than the real action. They have therefore very rationally limited that time to three hours, because a longer wou'd weary the attention; and, at the same time, wou'd prevent our uniting in the same point of view, the different circumstances of the action. Upon this principle, we have divided the play into five acts, for the conveniency of the spectators, and of the author also, who has leisure to bring about, during these intervals, any incident necessary to the plot or catastrophe. The whole of the objection then after all is no more, than that the action of Julius Cæsar lasts but two hours instead of three: and if that is no fault, neither can the division of its acts be esteem'd as one; because the

same rule which requires that an action of three hours shou'd be divided into five acts, will require also, that an action of two hours shou'd be divided into three only. There is no reason why, because the utmost extent of the play is limited to three hours, that therefore we shou'd not make it less; nor can I see why a tragedy, where the three unities are observ'd, which is interesting, and excites terror and compassion, which in short does every thing in two hours, that others do in three, shou'd not be equally good. A statue wherein the fine proportions and other rules of the art are observ'd, is not a less fine statue, because it is of a smaller size than another, made by the same rules. Nobody, I believe, thinks the Venus of Medicis less perfect in its kind than the Gladiator, because it is but four foot high, and the Gladiator six. Mr. de Voltaire, perhaps, gave his Cæsar less extent than is usually allow'd to dramatic performances, only to sound the opinion and taste of the public by an essay, if we may give that name to so finish'd a piece. It wou'd have made a kind of revolution in the French theatre, and had been, perhaps, too bold a venture, to talk of liberty and politics for three hours together, to a nation that had been so long accustom'd to see Mithridates fighting and whining, when he was just on the point

point of marching to the capitol. We are surely oblig'd to Mr. de Voltaire for his conduct, and ought by no means to condemn him for not bringing love, or women, into his play: born as they are, to inspire soft and tender sentiments, they wou'd have play'd an absurd and ridiculous part between Brutus and Cæsius, *Atroces Animæ*: they make indeed so conspicuous figures elsewhere, that they have no reason to complain of being excluded from Cæsar. I shall pass over the many detach'd beauties to be met with in this piece, the strength of its numbers, and the variety of images and sentiments scatter'd throughout. What might we not expect from the author of Brutus and the Henriade? the scene of the conspiracy is one of the finest we have ever seen on any stage: it hath call'd into action that which we never met with before but in dull narration.

* *Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus, & quæ
Ipse sibi tradit spectator.*

Even the death of Cæsar passes almost in sight of the spectators, and thus prevents a recital of it, which how

* See Horace de Arte Poetica. v. 180.

beautiful soever, must have been comparatively cold and languid; events of this kind, together with every circumstance attending them, being already known to all the world.

I cannot sufficiently admire this tragedy, when I consider what a variety of incidents there are in it, how great the characters are, and how finely supported: what a noble contrast between Brutus and Cæsar! What makes this subject most difficult to handle, is the great art required, to describe, on the one hand, Brutus with a savage ferocious virtue, and even bordering on ingratitude, but at the same time engag'd in a righteous cause, at least to all appearances, and conformable to the times he liv'd in; and on the other hand, Cæsar, full of clemency and the most amiable virtues, heaping favors on his enemies, and yet endeavouring to destroy the liberty of his country. We are strongly interested for both of them during the whole action of the piece, though it shou'd seem as if the passions must hurt and destroy each other reciprocally in the end, like two several weights equal and oppos'd to each other, and consequently cou'd produce no effect, but that of sending the spectators back disgusted, and without any emotion. Some such reflections most
probably

probably induc'd a * brother poet to declare, that he look'd upon this subject as the rock of dramatic authors, and that he wou'd gladly propose it to any of his rivals. But Mr. de Voltaire, not content with these difficulties, seems desirous of creating more, by making Brutus the son of Cæsar; which, however, is founded on history. He has even, by these means, found an opportunity of introducing some charming scenes, and throwing into his piece a new interest, which is united to the action, and brings on the catastrophe. The harangue of Antony produces a fine effect, and is, in my opinion, a model of seducing eloquence. Upon the whole, we may with truth assert, that Mr. de Voltaire, in this tragedy, has open'd a new path, and, at the same time, trod in it with the highest success.

* M. Martelli, who wrote several tragedies in Italian: he made use of a new species of rhimes, in the manner of Alexandrines, a novelty which was by no means favorable to his performances.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

JULIUS CÆSAR, Dictator.

MARK ANTONY, Consul.

JUNIUS BRUTUS, Prætor.

CASSIUS,

CIMBER,

DECIMUS,

DOLABELLA,

CASCA,

ROMANS.

LICTORS.

} Senators.

SCENE, the Capitol at ROME.

THE

THE
 D E A T H
 O F
 C Æ S A R.
 A
 T R A G E D Y.

ACT I. SCENE I.

CÆSAR, ANTONY.

ANTONY.

YES, Cæsar, thou shalt reign; the day is come,
 Propitious to thy vows, when haughty Rome
 At length shall know, and shall reward thy virtues,
 Long time unjust to thee and to herself,
 Shall hail thee on the throne her great avenger,
 Her conqu'ror, and her king: on Antony
 Thou may'st depend, who never felt the sting
 Of envy, but still held thy honour dear,

Ev'n as his own : thou know'st I form'd the chain
Which for the neck of Rome thou hast prepar'd,
Content to be the second of mankind ;
Fonder to bind the wreath on Cæsar's brows
Than rule myself : thou answer'st me with sighs,
And the fair prospect that elates my soul
Depresses thine ; the master of the world,
The king of Rome complains : can Cæsar mourn ?
Can Cæsar fear ? what can inspire a soul
Like thine with terror ?

CÆSAR.

Friendship, Antony :

But I must open all my heart to thee.
Thou know'st that I must leave thee, fate decrees
We must transport our arms to Babylon,
To wash out, in the savage Parthian's blood,
The shame of Crassus, and the Roman people :
My touring eagle to the Bosphorus
Shall wing his way, my faithful legions wait
But for the royal wreath around my brows,
The wish'd for signal : wherefore shou'd not Cæsar
Subdue a kingdom Alexander conquer'd ?
The Rhine submitted, why shou'd not Euphrates
To Cæsar's arms ? that hope shall animate
The bosom of thy friend, yet blinds him not ;
Fortune

Fortune perhaps, grown weary of her favours,
At length may leave me ; Pompey she betray'd,
And may quit Cæsar too ; the deepest wisdom
Is oft deceiv'd : where faction reigns, our fate
Suspended hangs, as on the battle's edge,
'Tis but a step from triumph to disgrace.
Cæsar, thou know'st, these forty years hath serv'd,
Commanded, conquer'd, seen the fate of empires
Lodg'd in my hands, and trust me, Antony,
In ev'ry action the decisive stroke
Depended on a moment : but whate'er
Chance may bring forth, my heart has nought to
fear,

Cæsar shall conquer without pride, or die
Without complaint : but from thy tender friendship
One precious boon I must demand of thee ;
My children, Antony, will find a friend,
I hope, in thee : I hope that Rome, by me
Defended, and by me subdu'd, will own
Thy pow'r ; thou shalt, with my sons, enjoy
The name of king, and rule o'er all mankind ;
Remember, 'tis the last request I make,
That thou wilt be a father to my children ;
I ask not for thy oaths, those idle sureties
Of human faith, thy promise is sufficient ;

For purer is thy word than sacred altars,
Oft stain'd with human perjury and falsehood.

ANTONY.

It was enough to leave thy Antony,
And seek for death in foreign climes without him ;
To Asia's plains, when glory calls my friend,
That I must stay in Italy to plead
My Cæsar's cause but it afflicts me more,
To see thy noble heart dejected thus,
Distrusting fortune, and presaging ills
That ne'er may happen : wherefore talk'st thou thus,
Of Antony's dividing with thy sons,
Thy fortunes, and thy fame ? thou hast no son
But thy Octavius, no adopted heir.

CÆSAR.

I can no longer hide from thee, my friend,
The griefs that prey upon a father's heart ;
Octavius, by the laws, is made the son
Of Cæsar's choice, I have appointed him
My successor ; but fate (or shall I call it
Propitious, or unkind I know not which)
Hath made me father to a real son,
One whom I love with tenderness, alas !
But ill repaid by him.

ANTONY.

ANTONY.

Can there be one
So base and so ungateful, so unworthy
The noble blood from whence he sprang?

CÆSAR.

Attend,

And mark me well : thou know'st th' unhappy Brutus,
Instructed in the school of savage virtue
By the stern Cato, he whose furious zeal
Defends our antient laws, the rigid foe
Of arbitrary pow'r, who, still in arms
Against me, gives my enemies new hope
And new support, who in Thessalia's plains
Was late my captive, whose life twice I sav'd,
Spite of himself, was born amongst my foes,
And bred up far from me.

ANTONY.

Cou'd Brutus, cou'd——

CÆSAR.

Believe not me, but read this paper.

ANTONY.

Gods!

The fierce Servilia ! Cato's haughty sister !

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

The same ; a private marriage made us one.
Cato, when first our public discord rose,
Indignant forc'd her to another's arms,
But her new husband, on the very day
That he espous'd her, dy'd ; and Cæsar's son
Was brought up in the name of Brutus, still
Was he reserv'd, ye gods, to hate his father !
But read, this fatal scroll will tell thee all.

ANTONY.

[Reads the paper.

*Cæsar, I die ; the wrath of heav'n, that cuts
My thread of life, alone can end my love.
Farewell : remember, Brutus is thy son :
And may that tender friendship for his father,
Which at her latest hour Servilia felt,
Live in his mind, and make him worthy of thee.*
Has cruel fate to Cæsar giv'n a son
So much unlike him !

CÆSAR.

Brutus hath his virtues :

His haughty courage, tho' it angers me,
Flatters my pride ; I feel a secret pleasure,
Tho' it offends me : his undaunted heart
Rises superior, and ev'n conquers mine ;

I am

I am astonish'd at him; and his firmness
So shakes my soul I know not how to blame him,
When he condemns the arbitrary pow'r
I have assum'd: his genius tow'rs above me:
As man and father, some bewitching charm
Deceives me still, and pleads his cause within;
Or, born a Roman, still my country's voice,
Spite of myself, breaks forth, and calls me tyrant:
Perhaps that liberty I mean t'oppress,
Stronger than Cæsar, forces me to love him:
Nay, more: if Brutus owes to me his life,
The son of Cæsar must abhor a master;
For in my early years I thought like him,
Detested Sylla, and the name of tyrant:
Myself had been like him, a citizen,
The partisan of liberty and Rome,
Had not that proud usurper Pompey strove
To crush my fame beneath his growing pow'r;
For I was born ambitious, fierce of soul,
Yet brave and virtuous; if I were not Cæsar,
I wou'd be Brutus—but we all must yield
To our condition: Brutus soon will talk
Another language, when he knows his birth:
Trust me, the royal wreath that's destin'd for him
Will bend the stubborn temper of his soul:
For manners change with fortune: nature, blood,
My

My favors, thy advice, united all
With int'rest and with duty, must restore him.

ANTONY.

I doubt it much ; I know his savage firmness ;
The sect he follows is a sect of fools,
Perverse and obstinate, whom nothing moves,
Intractable and bold ; they make a merit
Of hard'ning minds against humanity,
Whilst angry nature falls subdu'd before them ;
To these he listens, and to these alone.
The horrid tenets which these sons of pride
Call duty, hold dominion absolute,
And lord it o'er their adamantine hearts.
Cato himself, that wretched stoic, he
Who fell at Utica, that brain-sick hero,
Who spurn'd thy proffer'd pardon, and preferr'd
A shameful death to Cæsar's tender friendship,
Ev'n Cato was less stern, less proud, than he ;
Less to be fear'd than this ungrateful son,
Whom thy good heart wou'd thus endear to thee.

CÆSAR.

What hast thou said, my friend ? thy words alarm
me.

ANTONY.

ANTONY.

I love thee, Cæsar, and must not deceive thee.

CÆSAR.

Time softens all things.

ANTONY.

I despair of it.

CÆSAR.

What ! will his hatred——

ANTONY.

Trust me.

CÆSAR.

Well, no matter :

I am a father still : I oft have serv'd,
Nay sav'd, my bitt'rest foes : I wou'd be lov'd
By Rome and by my son ; my clemency
Shall conquer ev'ry heart ; the world subdu'd,
Shall join with Brutus to adore my pow'r.
Thou must assist me in the great design ;
Thou, Antony, didst lend thy useful arm
To aid me in the conquest of mankind,
Thou too must conquer Brutus ; try to soften
His spirit, and prepare his savage virtue
For the important secret which my heart
Dreads to reveal ; yet he must know it soon.

ANTONY

ANTONY.

I will do all, but cannot hope success.

SCENE II.

CÆSAR, ANTONY, DOLABELLA.

DOLABELLA.

Cæsar, the senators attend your pleasure,
Wait your supreme command, and crave admittance.

CÆSAR.

They've staid too long already; let them enter.

ANTONY.

They come, with hatred and sour discontent
On ev'ry brow.

SCENE III.

CÆSAR, ANTONY, BRUTUS, CASSIUS, CIMBER,
DECIMUS, CINNA, CASCA, &c. Lictors.

CÆSAR seated.

Welcome, ye pillars of immortal Rome,
And friends to Cæsar: Cimber, Decimus,
Cassius, and Cinna, and thou, dearest Brutus,
Come near: at length behold th'important hour
When Cæsar, if the gods shall smile upon me,
Goes to complete the conquest of the world,

To

To seize the throne of Cyrus, and appease
Our Crassus' angry shade: the time is come
When what remains of universal empire,
Still unsubdu'd, shall yield to Rome and me:
Euphrates calls; to-morrow I depart.
Brutus and Cassius follow me to Asia;
Antony's care is Gaul and Italy;
Cimber must rule o'er the subjected kings
Of Betis' borders, and th' Atlantick sea;
Lycia and Greece I give to Decimus;
Pontus to thee, Marcellus; and to Casca
All Syria's wide domain. Our conquests thus
Protected, and Rome left in happiness
And union, nought remains but to determine
What title Cæsar, arbiter of Rome,
And of the world, shall wear: by your command
Sylla was call'd Dictator; Marius, Consul;
And Pompey, Emp'ror: I subdued the last,
Let that suffice; new empires will demand
New names; we must have one more great, more
sacred,
Less liable to change; one long rever'd
In antient Rome, and dear to all mankind.
'Tis rumour'd thro' the world, that Rome, in vain,
Wars on the Persian; that a king alone

Must

Must conquer there, and only kings can rule :
Cæsar will go, but Cæsar is no king,
An humble citizen alone, but fam'd
For his past service, subject to the will
And fond caprice of an uncertain people,
Who yet may thwart —— you understand me,
Romans,
You know my hopes, my merit, and—— my pow'r.

CIMBER.

Cæsar, I'll answer thee. Those crowns, and sceptres,
That world you give us, to the people's eye,
And to the senate, jealous of their rights,
Appear an inj'ry, not a favor done,
On such conditions : Marius, Pompey, Sylla,
Those proud usurpers of the people's pow'r,
Never pretended thus to canton out
Rome's conquests, or to dictate thus, like kings :
We hoped from Cæsar's clemency a gift
More precious, and a nobler treasure, far
Above the kingdoms which thy bounty gave.

CÆSAR.

What woud'st thou ask of Cæsar ?

CIMBER.

Liberty.

CASSIUS.

CASSIUS.

It was thy promise ; thou didst swear thyself
For ever to uproot despotic pow'r.
I thought the happy moment now was come,
When the world's conqu'ror shou'd have made us happy :
Rome bath'd in blood, deserted, and enslav'd,
Found comfort in that hope : we were her children
Before we were thy slaves — I know thy pow'r,
And know what thou hast sworn.

BRUTUS.

Be Cæsar great,
But Rome still free : the mistress of the world
Abroad, shall she be manacled at home !
Rule o'er the universe, be call'd a queen,
And yet be fetter'd ! What will it avail
My wretched country, and her sons, to know
That Cæsar has new slaves to trample on ?
Perhaps the Persians are not our worst foes,
We may have greater. I've no more to offer.

CÆSAR.

And thou too, Brutus !

ANTONY. [aside to Cæsar.

Mark their insolence ;
And see if they are worthy of thy favour.

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

And dare ye thus, ungrateful as ye are,
 Abuse my patience, and exhaust my love?
 My subjects all, by right of conquest mine,
 I bought you with my sword; ye spurn'd indeed
 At Marius, but ye were the slaves of Pompey,
 And only breath till Cæsar's wrath, too long
 Restrain'd already, bursts with fury on you.
 Ye vile Republicans, by mercy taught
 But to rebel, ye durst not thus have talk'd
 To Sylla; but my clemency provokes
 Your base ungrateful spirit to insult me:
 Cæsar, you think, will never condescend
 To take revenge, this makes you talk so bravely
 Of Rome and of your country, and affect
 This patriot pride, this grandeur of the soul,
 Before your conqu'ror: to Pharsalia's plains
 You shou'd have brought 'em; fortune now has plac'd

us

At distance from each other: henceforth learn,
 Who knows not how to conquer, must obey.

BRUTUS.

No: Cæsar we shall only learn to die.
 Who begg'd his life in Thessaly? Thou gav'st
 What was not ask'd indeed, but to debase us,

And

And we abhor the gift on such conditions.

Obeys thee? No: pour forth thy wrath upon us;
Begin with me; strike here, if thou wou'd'st reign.

CÆSAR.

Brutus attend —— you may retire.

[To the senators, who go out.

What words

Are these? away! They pierce my very soul;
Cæsar is far from wishing for thy death:
Leave this rash senate, I entreat thee, stay,
Thou only can'st disarm me; thee alone
Cæsar wou'd wish to love: stay with me, Brutus.

BRUTUS.

But keep thy promise, and I'm thine for ever:
If thou'rt a tyrant, I detest thy love;
I will not stay with Antony or thee:
He is no Roman, for he wants a king.

S C E N E IV.

CÆSAR, ANTONY.

ANTONY.

What says my friend? Did Antony deceive him?
Think'st thou that nature e'er can move a soul
So fierce, and so inflexible? No: leave,
I beg thee, unreveal'd the fatal secret

That

That weighs upon thy heart : let him deplore
The fall of Rome, but never let him know
Whose blood he persecutes : he merits not
His noble birth, ungrateful to thy goodness,
Ungrateful to thy love ; henceforth renounce him.

CÆSAR.

I cannot, for I love him still.

ANTONY.

Then cease

To love thy pow'r, renounce the diadem,
Descend from the high rank which thou hast borne ;
Mercy ill suits with thy authority :
It checks thy growing pow'r, and mars thy purpose.
What ! Rome beneath thy laws, and suffer Cassius
To thwart thee thus ; and Cimber too, and Cinna ;
Shall senators like these, obscure and low,
Talk thus before the sov'reign of mankind ?
The vanquish'd wretches breath, and brave their
master.

CÆSAR.

My equals born, they yielded to my arms ;
Too much above to fear them : I forgive
Their trembling at the yoke which they must bear.

ANTONY.

ANTONY.

Marius had been less sparing of their blood,
And Sylla wou'd have punish'd them.

CÆSAR.

That Sylla

Was a Barbarian, born but to oppress :
Murther and rage were all his policy,
And all his grandeur : amidst sighs and groans,
And punishments and death, he govern'd Rome :
He was its terror, I wou'd be its joy,
And its delight : I know the people well ;
A day will change 'em ; lavish of their love
And of their hatred ; both are gain'd with ease :
My grandeur galls 'em, but my clemency
Attracts 'em still : 'tis policy to pardon
The foe that cannot hurt us, and an air
Of liberty will reconcile their minds,
And make their chains fit easy : I must cover
The pit with flowr's, if I wou'd draw e'm to it,
And sooth the tiger e'er I bind him fast.
Yes, I will please them, ev'n whilst I oppress ;
Charm, and enslave them, and revenge myself
On ev'ry foe by forcing him to love me.

ANTONY.

You must be fear'd, or you will never reign.

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

In battle only Cæsar wou'd be fear'd.

ANTONY.

The people will abuse thy easy nature.

CÆSAR.

I tell thee, no; the people worship me.
Behold that temple there, which Rome hath rais'd
To Cæsar's clemency.

ANTONY.

They'll raise another
Perhaps to vengeance: thou hast cause to dread
Their ranc'rous hearts, still cherish'd by despair,
Cruel by duty, and the slaves of Rome.
Cassius alarm'd foresees that Antony
This day shall place the crown on Cæsar's head,
And ev'n before thy face they murmur'd at it.
'Twere best to gain the most impetuous of them,
And win 'em to our int'rest: to prevent
All danger, Cæsar must constrain himself.

CÆSAR.

Cou'd I have fear'd, I wou'd have punish'd them;
Advise me not to make myself detested:
Cæsar has learn'd to fight, has learn'd to conquer,

But

But knows not how to punish : let us hence,
And, strangers to suspicion and revenge,
Rule without violence o'er the conquer'd world.

END of the FIRST ACT.

ACT II. SCENE I.

BRUTUS, ANTONY, DOLABELLA.

ANTONY.

THIS bitterness of hate, this proud refusal,
Breaths less of virtue than of savage fierceness :
Cæsar's indulgence, his high rank and pow'r,
At least deserv'd a milder treatment from you,
And more complacency ; you might at least
Have talk'd with him : did you but know with whom
You are at variance, you wou'd shudder at it —

BRUTUS.

I shudder now ; but 'tis at hearing thee ;
Foe to thy country, which thou hast betray'd
And sold to Cæsar, think'st thou to deceive
Or to corrupt me ? go, and cringe to him,
Fawn on your haughty lord, I know your arts,
You long to be a slave ; you want a king,
Yet you are Romans.

VOL. II

I

ANTONY.

ANTONY.

Brutus, I'm a friend,
And boast a heart that loves humanity :
I am contented with this humble virtue :
But thou woud'st be a hero, yet art nought
But a barbarian ; and thy savage pride
Grew fond of virtue, but to make us loath her.

SCENE II.

BRUTUS alone.

What baseness, heav'n ! what ignominious slaves !
Behold, my wretched country, your support,
Horatius, Decius, and thou great avenger
Of sacred laws, Brutus, my kindred blood,
Behold your successors ; just gods, are these
The noble reliques of our Roman grandeur ?
We kiss the hand that binds us to the yoke ;
Cæsar has ravish'd e'vn our virtues from us :
I look for Rome, but find it now no more.
O ye immortal heroes, ye who fell
In her defence, whose images now strike
My soul with awe, and fill my eyes with tears,
The family of Pompey, and thou Cato,
Thou last of Scipio's glorious race, I feel
A lively spark of your immortal virtues
Rebound from you, and animate my heart :

You

You live in Brutus still, and in his breast
Have left the honour of the Roman name
The tyrant wou'd have stol'n. What do I see,
Great Pompey, at thy statues foot? a paper.

[He takes the paper and reads.

Brutus, thou sleep'st, and Rome's in chains.

O Rome,

My eyes are ever open still for thee;
Reproach me not for chains which I abhor.
Another paper! *No: thou art not Brutus:*
Cruel reflection! Tyrant Cæsar, tremble,
This stroke must end thee: *no: thou art not Brutus,*
I am, I will be Brutus; I will perish,
Or set my country free: Rome still, I see,
Has virtuous hearts: she calls for an avenger,
And has her eyes on Brutus; she awakens
My sleeping soul, and shakes my tardy hand:
She calls for blood, and shall be satisfy'd.

SCENE III.

BRUTUS, CASSIUS, CINNA, CASCA, DECIMUS.

Attendants.

CASSIUS.

'Tis the last time we may embrace, my friends,
Bury'd beneath the ruins of his country,
Cassius must fall; Cæsar can ne'er forgive me;

He knows our hearts, he knows our resolution;
Our souls, untainted by corruption, thwart
His purposes; in us he will destroy
The last of Romans: yes, my friends, 'tis past;
Our laws, our country, and our honour's lost;
Rome is no more; he triumphs over her,
And o'er mankind; our thoughtless ancestors
But fought for Cæsar, but for Cæsar conquer'd:
The spoils of kings, the sceptre of the world,
Six hundred years of virtues, toils, and war,
Were spent for Cæsar; he enjoys the fruit
Of all our dear-bought vict'ries: O, my Brutus,
Wert thou too born to crouch beneath a master?
Our liberty is gone.

BRUTUS.

It will revive.

CASSIUS.

What say'st thou? hark! did you not hear a shout?

BRUTUS.

'Twas the vile rabble: think not of them, Cassius.

CASSIUS.

Did'st thou say, liberty — that noise again!

SCENE IV.

BRUTUS, CASSIUS, DECIMUS, CIMBER.

CASSIUS.

Ah! Cimper, is it thou? speak, what hath happen'd?

DECIMUS.

Some new attempt on liberty and Rome,
What hast thou seen?

CIMBER.

Our shame. When haughty Cæsar
Came to the temple, he look'd down upon us
Ev'n like the thund'rer, Capitolian Jove;
Then proudly told us of his bold design
Of adding Persia to the Roman empire:
The people kneel'd before their idol, call'd him
Rome's great avenger, conqu'ror of the world;
But Cæsar wanted yet another title
To gratify his insolent ambition;
When, lo! amid'st this scene of adulation,
Came Antony, and buffled thro' the croud
That stood 'twixt him and Cæsar; in his hand
A crown and sceptre: when, O shameful act,
Disgraceful to a Roman! whilst we stood
In silent admiration, unabash'd,
He plac'd the crown on Cæsar's head; then kneel'd,

And cry'd out, Cæsar live and reign o'er us,
And o'er the world: our Romans, as he spake,
Turn'd pale, and with their cries tumultuous wrung
The temple's vaulted roof: some fled with terror,
Whilst others blushing stood, and wept their fate.
Cæsar, who read resentment in their looks,
And indignation but too visible,
With well-dissembled modesty, took off
The radiant crown, and roll'd it at his feet.
Instant the scene was chang'd, and ev'ry Roman
Welcom'd with smiles returning liberty,
Ill-founded hopes, and momentary joy!
Antony seem'd astonish'd: Cæsar still
Blush'd and dissembled; and the more he strove
To hide his grief, the more was he applauded.
By moderation he wou'd veil his crimes,
Affects to scorn the crown, and spurn it from him:
But, spite of all his efforts to conceal it,
Was gall'd within to hear the people praise him
For virtues which he never will possess.
No longer able to conceal his rage
And disappointment, with contracted brow
He left the capitol, and in an hour
The senate must attend him: an hour hence
Shall Cæsar change the state of Rome: thou know'st,

O

O Brutus! half our senate is corrupted,
Have bought their country, and will sell it now
To Cæsar: they are far more infamous
Ev'n than the people, who at least abhor
The name of king: Cæsar, already vested
With regal pow'r, yet wishes for the crown;
The people have refus'd him, but the senate
Bestow it on him: what remains?

CASSIUS.

To die;

To end a life of mis'ry and reproach:
I've dragg'd it on whilst yet a ray of hope
Dawn'd on my country, but her latest hour
Is come, and Cassius never shall survive her.
Let others weep for Rome, I can't avenge
My country's cause, but I can perish with her.
I go where all our gods—O Scipio, Pompey,
'Tis time to follow you, and imitate
Great Cato.

BRUTUS.

No: we'll not be followers,
But bright examples: the world's eye, my friends,
Is fix'd on us; be it our part to answer
The great expectance of our bleeding country.
Had Cato ta'en my counsel, he had fall'n

More nobly, and the tyrant's blood had flow'd
Mix'd with his own: he turn'd his blameless hand
Against himself; but little did his death
Avail mankind: Cato did all for glory,
And nothing for his country: there, my friends,
There only err'd the greatest of mankind.

CASSIUS.

What can we do in this disastrous crisis?

BRUTUS.

[Shews the paper.

See what was wrote to me, and learn our duty.

CASSIUS.

The same reproach was sent to me.

BRUTUS.

It shews

We had deserv'd it.

CIMBER.

Quick, the fatal hour

Approaches, when a tyrant shall destroy

The Roman name: one hour, and all is gone.

BRUTUS.

One hour, and Cæsar—dies.

CASSIUS.

Ha! now thou art

What Brutus shou'd be.

DECIMUS.

DECIMUS.

—Worthy of thy race,

The scourge of tyrants ; thou hast spoke the thoughts
Of my own heart.

CASSIUS.

O Brutus, thou reviv'st me ;

'Twas what my sorrows, what my rage expected
From thy exalted virtue ; Rome inspires
The great design ; thy voice alone decrees
The death of tyrants : O my dearest Brutus,
Let us blot out this infamous reproach
On all mankind, and whilst Jove's thunder sleeps,
Revenge the capitol. What say ye, Romans,
Have ye the same unconquerable heart,
The same desires ?

CIMBER.

Cassius, we think with you,
Despise the thought of life, abhor the tyrant ;
We love our country, and we will avenge her.
If there's a spark of Roman virtue left,
Brutus and Cassius will revive it.

DECIMUS.

Born

The guardians of the state, the great avengers
Of ev'ry crime, too long th' oppressive hand
Of pow'r hath gall'd us, and 'twere added guilt

To spare the tyrant, or suspend the blow :
Say, whom shall we admit to share this honour ?

BRUTUS.

We are ourselves enow to save our country.
Emilius, Dolabella, Lepidus
And Bibulus, are all the slaves of Cæsar.
Cic'ro may serve us with his eloquence,
And that alone ; he can harangue the senate,
But is too timid in the hour of danger :
He'll talk for Rome, but is not fit t'avenge her :
We'll leave the orator who charms his country
The task of praising us when we have sav'd it.
With you alone, my friends, will I partake
This glorious danger, this immortal honour :
The senate are to meet him an hour hence,
There I'll surprize, destroy him there : this sword,
Deep in his bosom bury'd, shall revenge
Cato, and Pompey, and the Roman people :
I know th' attempt is perilous and bold :
His watchful guards are plac'd on ev'ry side :
The changeful people, flutt'ring and inconstant,
Are doubtful whether they shou'd love or hate him.
Death seems, my friends, to be our certain fate :
But O! how glorious such a death will be !

How

How much to be desir'd ! how noble is it
To fall in such a cause, to see our blood
Flow with the blood of tyrants ; with what pleasure
Shall we behold this last illustrious hour !
Yes, let us die, my friends, but die with Cæsar ;
And may that liberty his crimes oppress
Rise from his ashes, and for ever flourish !

CASSIUS.

Debate not then, but to the capitol
Let us away ; there he has injur'd us,
And there 'tis fit he shou'd be sacrific'd :
Fear not the people, tho' they're doubtful now,
Whene'er the idol falls, they will detest him.

BRUTUS.

Swear then with me upon this sword ; all swear
By Cato's blood, by Pompey's, by the shades
Of those brave Romans who in Afric's plains
Fell glorious ; swear by all th' avenging gods
Of Rome, that Cæsar by your hands shall die.

CASSIUS.

Let us do more, my friends ; here let us swear
To root out all who, like himself, shall strive
To govern here : sons, brothers, fathers, all,
If they are tyrants, Brutus, are our foes :
A true republican has neither son,

Father

Father, nor brother, but the common-weal,
His gods, the laws, his virtue, and his country.

BRUTUS.

For ever let me join my blood with yours ;
All link'd together in one sacred knot,
Th' adopted sons of Liberty and Rome,
We'll seal our union with the tyrant's blood.

[advancing towards the statue of Pompey.]

By you, illustrious heroes, who excite
Our duty, and inspire the great design,
O Pompey, at thy sacred knees, we swear,
Nought for ourselves we do, but all for Rome,
We swear to be united for our country ;
We swear to live, to fight, and die together.
Let us be gone : away : we've staid too long.

SCENE V.

CÆSAR, BRUTUS.

CÆSAR.

Stop, Brutus, I must talk with thee ; attend :
Where woud'st thou fly ?

BRUTUS.

From Tyranny, and thee.

CÆSAR.

Lictors, detain him.

BRUTUS.

Thou wou'd'st have my life,

Take it.

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

No: Brutus, had I wanted that,
Thou know'st, I cou'd command it with a word,
And thou hast merited no better fate:
It is the pride of thy ungrateful heart
Still to offend me; and I find thee here
Amongst those Romans whose dark perfidy
I most suspect, with those who proudly dar'd
To blame my conduct, and defy my pow'r.

BRUTUS.

They talk'd like Romans, gave thee noble counsel;
Had'st thou been wise, thou wou'd'st have follow'd it.

CÆSAR.

Yet I'll be calm, and bear thy insolence,
Will stoop beneath myself, and talk to thee.
What lay'st thou to my charge?

BRUTUS.

A ravag'd world,

The blood of nations, and thy plunder'd country;
Thy pow'r, thy specious virtues that gild o'er
Thy crimes, thy fatal clemency, that makes
Thy chains so easy, a destructive charm
To sooth thy captives, and deceive mankind.

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

Reproach like this had suited Pompey well ;
He whose dissembled virtues have betray'd thee,
That haughty citizen, more fatal far,
Wou'd not admit ev'n Cæsar as his equal.
Think'st thou, if he had conquer'd, his proud soul
Had left secure the liberty of Rome ?
He wou'd have rul'd you with a rod of iron,
What then had Brutus done ?

BRUTUS.

He wou'd have slain him.

CÆSAR.

Is that the fate which Cæsar must expect
From thee ? thou answer'st not. O Brutus, Brutus,
Thou liv'st but for my ruin.

BRUTUS.

If thou think'st so,
Prevent my fury, what witholds thee ?

CÆSAR.

[Giving him the letter from Servilia,
Nature,

And my own heart : read there, ungrateful, read
And know whose blood thou hast oppos'd to mine ;
See whom thou hat'st, and if thou dar'st, go on.

BRUTUS.

BRUTUS.

[reading.]

What have I read? where am I? do my eyes
Deceive me?

CÆSAR.

Now my son, my Brutus.

BRUTUS.

Cæsar

My father, gracious gods!

CÆSAR.

Ungrateful, yes

I am thy father: whence this deadly silence?

Why fobb'st thou thus, my son? Why do I hold thee

Thus in my arms mute and insensible?

Nature alarms, but cannot soften thee.

BRUTUS.

O dreadful fate! it drives me to despair:

My oaths! my country! Rome for ever dear!

Cæsar—alas! I've liv'd too long.

CÆSAR.

O speak,

I see thy heart is lab'ring with remorse

And anguish: O hide nothing from me: still

Thou'rt silent: does the sacred name of son

Offend thee, Brutus? art thou fearful of it?

Fear'st thou to love me, to partake my fortunes?

Is Cæsar's blood so hateful to thee! Oh

This

This sceptre of the world, this pow'r supreme,
For thee alone, that Cæsar, whom thou hat'st,
Desir'd them : with Octavius and thyself
I wish'd but to divide the rich reward
Of all my labours, and the name of king.

BRUTUS.

O gods !

CÆSAR.

Thou can'st not speak : these transports, Brutus,
Spring they from hatred, or from tenderness ?
What secret weight hangs heavy on thy soul ?

BRUTUS.

Cæsar—

CÆSAR.

Well, what ?

BRUTUS.

I cannot speak to him.

CÆSAR.

Thou seem'st as if thou durst not call me father.

BRUTUS.

O, if thou art my father, grant me this
This only boon.

CÆSAR.

Ask it : to give it thee

Will make me happy.

BRUTUS.

Kill me then this moment,

Or wish no more to be a king.

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

Away

Barbarian, hence ! unworthy of my love,
Unworthy of thy race, thou art no more
My son : go, henceforth I disclaim thee ;
My heart shall take example from thy own,
And stifle nature's voice ; shall learn of thee
To be inhuman : hence, I know thee not.
Think not I mean again to supplicate,
No, thou shalt see I've pow'r to crush you all :
I will no longer listen to the pleas
Of mercy, but obey the laws of justice ;
My easy heart is weary of forgiveness :
I'll act like Sylla now, like him be cruel,
And make you tremble at my vengeance : go,
Find out your vile seditious friends, they all
Insulted me, and all shall suffer for it :
They know what Cæsar can do, and shall find
What Cæsar dare : if I am barbarous,
Remember, thou alone hast made me so.

BRUTUS.

I must not leave him to his cruel purpose,
But save, if possible, my friends, and Cæsar.

END of the SECOND ACT.

A C T

ACT III. SCENE I.

CASSIUS, CIMBER, DECIMUS, CINNA, CASCA,
with the rest of the Conspirators.

CASSIUS.

At length the hour is come when Rome again
Shall breath, again shall flourish; unoppress'd
By tyrants, soon the mistress of the world
To freedom and to fame shall be restor'd.
Yours is the honour, Decimus, and Casca,
Cimber, and Probus, but one hour and Cæsar
Shall be no more: what Cato, Pompey, all
The pow'r of Asia, never cou'd perform,
We, my brave friends, alone shall execute;
We will avenge our country: on this day
Thus may we speak to all mankind: *Henceforth*
Respect the state of Rome, for she is free.

CIMBER.

Behold thy friends all ready to obey thee;
To live or die with thee; to serve the senate;
To take the tyrant's life, or lose their own.

DECIMUS.

But where is Brutus, Cæsar's deadliest foe,
He who assembled, he who made us swear,

Who

Who first shall plunge the dagger in his breast,
Why comes he not? the son-in-law of Cato
Shou'd not have tarry'd thus; he may be stopp'd;
Cæsar perhaps may know—but see he comes;
Gods! what dejection in his aspect!

SCENE II.

BRUTUS, the rest of the Conspirators.

CASSIUS.

Brutus,

What sinks thee thus? what new misfortune? say,
Doth Cæsar know it all? is Rome betray'd?

BRUTUS.

He knows not our design upon his life,
But trusts to you.

DECI-MUS.

What then hath troubled thee?

BRUTUS.

A dreadful secret, that will make you tremble.

- CASSIUS.

Cæsar's approaching death! perhaps our own!
Brutus, we all can die, but shall not tremble.

BRUTUS.

I will unveil it, and astonish thee.
Cæsar thou know'st is Brutus' foe; I've sworn

To

To kill him, fix'd the time, the place, the moment
Of his destruction: 'tis but what I owe
To Rome, to you, and your posterity,
Nay, to the happiness of all mankind,
And the first blow must come from Brutus' hand:
All is prepar'd: and now let me inform thee,
That Brutus is — his son.

CIMBER.

The son of Cæsar!

CASSIUS.

His son!

DECIMUS.

O Rome!

BRUTUS.

Yes: Cæsar and Servilia,

Marry'd in private, Brutus was the fruit
Of their unhappy nuptials.

CIMBER.

Art thou then

A tyrant's son?

CASSIUS.

It cannot, must not be:

Thou art too much a Roman.

BRUTUS.

'Tis too true;

Ye see my friends the horror of my fate:

But I am yours, for sacred is my word:

Which

Which of you all hath strength of mind sufficient,
With more than stoic courage, far above
The common race of men, to tell me how
Brutus shou'd act? I yield me to your sentence:
All silent! all with down cast eyes! thou, Cassius,
Wilt not thou speak? no friendly hand stretch'd out
To save me from this horrid precipice!

BRUTUS.

Cassius, thou tremblest; thy astonish'd soul—

CASSIUS.

I tremble at the counsel I must give.

BRUTUS,

Yet speak.

CASSIUS.

Were Brutus one amongst the croud
Of vulgar citizens, I shou'd have said,
Go, be a brother tyrant, serve thy father,
Destroy that country which thou shoud'st support,
Rome shall hereafter be reveng'd on both:
But I am talking to the noble Brutus,
The scourge of tyrants, whose unconquer'd heart
Hath not a drop of Cæsar's blood within it:
Thou knew'st the traitor Catiline, whose rage
Was well nigh fatal to us all.

BRUTUS.

BRUTUS.

I did.

CASSIUS.

If on the day when that abhorred monster
Levell'd the blow at liberty and Rome,
If when the senate had condemn'd the traitor
He had acknowledg'd Brutus for his son,
How woud'st thou then have acted?

BRUTUS.

Can'st thou ask me?

Think'st thou, my heart, thus in a moment chang'd,
Cou'd ballance 'twixt a traitor and my country!

CASSIUS.

Brutus, that word alone points out thy duty:
It is the senate's will, and Rome's in safety.
But say, hast thou indeed those secret checks
Which vulgar minds mistake for nature's voice,
And shall a word from Cæsar thus extinguish
Thy love for Rome, thy duty, and thy faith?
Or true or false the secret that he told thee,
Is he less guilty, art thou less a Roman,
Art thou not Brutus, tho' the son of Cæsar?
Is not thy hand, thy heart, thy honour pledg'd
To us and to thy country? If thou art

The

The tyrant's son, Rome is thy mother still,
We are thy brothers. Born as Brutus was
Within these sacred walls, th' adopted son
Of Cato, bred by Scipio and by Pompey,
The friend of Cassius, what woud'st thou desire ?
These are thy noblest titles, and another
Wou'd but disgrace them : what if Cæsar, smit
With lawless passion for the fair Servilia,
Seduced her to his arms, and gave thee birth,
Bury thy mother's follies in oblivion :
'Twas Cato form'd thy noble soul to virtue,
And Cato is thy father ; therefore loose
The shameful tie that binds thee to another :
Firm to thy oaths and to thy cause remain,
And own no parents but the world's avengers.

BRUTUS.

My noble friends, to you I next appeal.

CIMBER.

By Cassius judge of us, by us of Cassius :
Cou'd we think otherwise, of all Rome's sons
We were most guilty : but why ask of us
What thy own breast can best inform thee ? Brutus
Alone can tell what Brutus ought to do.

BRUTUS.

BRUTUS.

Now then, my friends, I'll lay my heart before you,
With all its horrors; O 'tis deeply wounded,
And tears have flow'd ev'n from a stoick's eye:
After the dreadful oath which I have made
To serve my country, and to kill my father,
I weep to see myself the son of Cæsar,
Admire his virtues, and condemn his crimes,
Lament the hero, and abhor the tyrant,
Pity and horror rend my troubled soul;
I wish that fate you have prepar'd for him
Wou'd fall on Brutus: but I'll tell you more,
Know, I esteem him, and 'midst all his crimes,
His nobleness of heart has won me to him:
If Rome cou'd e'er submit to regal pow'r,
He is the only tyrant we shou'd spare.
Be not alarm'd; that name alone secures me, *
Rome and the senate have my faith, the welfare
Of all mankind declares against a king.
Yes, I embrace the virtuous talk with horror,
And tremble at it, but I will be faithful:
I go to talk with Cæsar, and perhaps
To change and soften him, perhaps to save
Rome and himself: O may the gods bestow
Persuasive utt'rance on my lips, and pow'r

To move his soul ; but if in vain I plead
The cause of liberty, if Cæsar still
Is deaf to my intreaties, strike, destroy him,
I'll not betray my country for my father ;
The world, astonish'd, may approve or blame
My cruel firmness, and this deed hereafter
Be call'd a deed of horror, or of glory ;
My soul is not ambitious of applause,
Or fearful of reproach ; a Roman still,
And independent, to the voice of duty
And that alone I listen ; for the rest,
'Tis equal all ; away ; be slaves no longer.

CASSIUS.

The welfare of the state depends on thee,
And on thy sacred word we shall rely,
As if great Cato and the gods of Rome
Had promis'd to defend us.

SCENE III.

BRUTUS alone.

Cæsar comes

Ev'n now to meet me, 'tis th' appointed hour,
And this the place, ev'n in the capitol,
Where he must die : let me not hate him, gods !

O stop this arm uplifted to destroy him,
 Inspire his noble heart with love of Rome,
 And if he is my father, make him just !
 He comes : I have not pow'r to speak, or move,
 Great spirit of Cato, now support my virtue !

S C E N E IV.

CÆSAR, BRUTUS.

CÆSAR.

Brutus, we're met : what wou'dst thou ? hast thou yet
 A human heart ? art thou the son of Cæsar.

BRUTUS.

I am, if Cæsar be the son of Rome.

CÆSAR.

Was it for this, thou proud republican,
 We met together ? com'st thou to insult me ?
 Not all my bounties shou'd upon thy head,
 Glory and empire, and a subject world,
 Waiting to pay thee homage, nought can move
 Thy stubborn heart : what think'st thou of a crown ?

BRUTUS.

I think on it with horror.

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

Prejudice

And passion blind thee, I excuse thy weakness ;
But can'st thou hate me ?

BRUTUS.

No : I love thee, Cæsar ;
Thy noble deeds long since inclin'd my heart
To rev'rence thee ; before thou had'st disclos'd
The secret of my birth, I wept to see thee
At once the glory and the scourge of Rome :
Wou'd Cæsar be a Roman citizen,
I shou'd adore him, and wou'd sacrifice
My life and fortune to defend his cause ;
But Cæsar, as a king, I must abhor.

CÆSAR.

What do'st thou hate me for ?

BRUTUS.

Thy tyranny.

O listen to the counsel, to the pray'rs,
The tears of Rome, the senate, and thy son ;
Wou'dst thou desire to be the first of men ?
Wou'dst thou enjoy a right superior far
To all that war and conquest can bestow ?
Wou'dst thou be more than king, nay more than

Cæsar——

CÆSAR.

What's to be done?

BRUTUS.

Thou see'st the world enslav'd,
Bound to thy chariot, break their chains in sunder,
Renounce the diadem, and be a Roman.

CÆSAR.

What hast thou bade me do?

BRUTUS.

What Sylla did

Before thee; he had waded in our blood,
He made Rome free, and all was soon forgotten;
Deep as his hands were dipp'd in deadly slaughter,
He left the throne, and wash'd his crimes away.
Thou had'st not Sylla's cruelty and rage,
Adopt his virtues then; thy heart, we know,
Can pardon, therefore can thy heart do more;
'Tis Rome thou must forgive: then shalt thou reign
As Cæsar shou'd, then Brutus is thy son:
Still do I plead in vain?

CÆSAR.

Rome wants a master,
As one day thou perhaps may'st dearly prove.
Brutus, our laws shou'd with our manners change;
That liberty thou dot'st on is no more

Than

Than the fool's right to hurt himself, and Rome,
That spred destruction round the world, now seems
To work her own; the great Coloffus falls,
And in her ruin buries half mankind :
To me she stretches forth her feeble arm
To aid her in her perils. Since the days
Of Sylla, all our virtue's lost; the laws,
Rome, and the state, are nought but empty names.
Alas ! thou talk'st in these corrupted times
As if the Decii, and Æmilii liv'd;
Cato deceiv'd thee, and thy fatal virtue
Will but destroy thy country, and thyself;
Submit thy reason to the conqueror
Of Cato and of Pompey, to a father
Who loves thee, Brutus, who laments thy errors;
Give me thy heart, and be indeed my son :
Take other steps, and force not nature thus
Against thy self: not answer me, my Brutus,
But turn thy eyes away ?

BRUTUS.

I'm not my self:
Strike me, ye gods ! O Cæsar——

CÆSAR.

Thou art mov'd,
I see thou art, my son; thy soften'd soul——

K 3

BRUTUS.

BRUTUS.

Thy life's in danger; know'st thou that, my father?
Know'st thou, there's not a Roman then but wishes
In secret to destroy thee? let thy own,
Thy country's safety, plead my cause: by me
Thy genius speaks, it throws me at thy feet,
And presses for thy welfare; in the name
Of all those gods thou hast so late forgotten,
Of all thy virtues, in the name of Rome;
Shall I yet add the tender name of son,
A son who trembles for thee, who prefers
To Cæsar Rome alone, O hear, and save me!

CÆSAR.

Leave me, my Brutus, leave me.

BRUTUS.

Be persuaded.

CÆSAR.

The world may change, but Cæsar never will.

BRUTUS.

This is thy answer then?

CÆSAR.

I am resolv'd;

Rome must obey, when Cæsar hath determin'd.

BRUTUS.

Then fare thee well.

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

Ha! wherefore? stay, my son,
Thou weep'st, can Brutus weep? is it because
Thou ha'st a king? dost thou lament for Rome?

BRUTUS.

I weep for thee, and thee alone; farewell!

[Exit Brutus.]

CÆSAR.

Heroic virtue! how I envy Brutus!
Wou'd I cou'd love like him the commonweal!

SCENE V.

CÆSAR, DOLABELLA, ROMANS.

DOLABELLA.

Cæsar, the senate, at the temple met
By thy command, await thee, and the throne
Already is prepar'd, the people throng
Around thy statues, and the senate fix
Their wav'ring minds; but, if I might be heard,
If Cæsar wou'd give ear to one who loves him,
A fellow-foldier and a friend, to augurs,
To dreadful omens, to the gods themselves,
He wou'd defer the great event.

CÆSAR.

Away:

K 4

Defer

Defer such glorious business! lose a crown,
What power shall stop me?

DOLABELLA.

Nature doth conspire
With heav'n to blast thy purpose, and foretell
Thy death.

CÆSAR.

No matter, Cæsar's but a man;
Nor do I think that heav'n would e'er disturb
The course of nature, or the elements
Rise in confusion, to prolong the life
Of one poor mortal; by th' immortal gods
Our days are number'd; we must yield to fate;
Cæsar has nought to fear.

DOLABELLA.

Cæsar has foes,
And this new yoke may gall them; what if these
Conspire against thee!

CÆSAR.

O, they dare not do it.

DOLABELLA.

Thy heart's too confident.

CÆSAR.

Such poor precautions

Wou'd

Wou'd make me look contemptible, perhaps
Wou'd do me little service.

DOLABELLA.

For Rome's safety
Cæsar shou'd live: at least permit thy friend
T' attend thee to the senate.

CÆSAR.

No: why alter
Our first resolve? why hasten the decrees
Of fate? who changes only shews his weakness.

DOLABELLA.

I quit thee with regret, and own I fear.
Alas! my heart beats heavily.

CÆSAR.

Away.
Better to die than be afraid of death:
Farewell.

SCENE VI.

DOLABELLA, ROMANS.

DOLABELLA.

What hero better cou'd deserve
The homage of mankind? O join with me,
Ye Romans, to admire and honour Cæsar;

Live to obey, and die to serve him—heav'n!
What noise is that, what dreadful clamours!

The CONSPIRATORS, behind the scenes.

Die,

Die, tyrant: courage, Cassius.

DOLABELLA.

Fly, and save him.

SCENE VII.

CASSIUS, a dagger in his hand, DOLABELLA, ROMANS.

CASSIUS.

The deed is done: he's dead.

DOLABELLA.

Assist me, Romans,

Strike, kill the traitor.

CASSIUS.

Hear me, countrymen,

I am your friend, and your deliverer,

Have broke your chains, and set the nation free:

The conqu'rors of the world are now the sons
Of liberty.

DOLABELLA.

O! Romans, shall the blood
Of Cæsar—

CASSIUS.

I have slain my friend, to serve

The

The cause of Rome ; he wou'd have made you slaves,
 And therefore have I slain him : is there one,
 Amongst you all, so base, so mean of soul,
 As to be fond of slav'ry, and regret
 A tyrant's loss ? is there one Roman left
 That wishes for a king ? if one there be,
 Let him appear, let him complain to Cassius ;
 But ye are fond of glory all, I know
 Ye are, and will applaud me for the deed.

ROMANS.

Perish his mem'ry ! Cæsar was a tyrant.

CASSIUS.

Preserve these gen'rous sentiments, ye sons
 Of happy Rome, ye masters of the world ;
 Antony means, I know, to tamper with you,
 But you'll remember, he was Cæsar's slave,
 Bred up beneath him from his infant years,
 And in corruption's school has learn'd from him
 The tyrant's art ; he comes to vindicate
 His master, and to justify his crimes ;
 Contemns you all, and thinks he can deceive you :
 He has a right to speak, and must be heard,
 Such is the law of Rome, and to the laws
 I shall submit ; but in the people still

Is lodg'd the pow'r supreme, to judge of Cæsar,
Of Antony, and me : ye now once more
Possess those rights which had been wrested from you,
Which Cæsar took, and Cassius hath restor'd :
He will confirm them : but I go, my friends,
To meet great Brutus at the capitol ;
To those deserted walls once more to bring
Long absent justice, and our exil'd gods ;
To calm the rage of faction, and repair
The ruins of our liberty : for you,
I ask you but to know your happiness,
And to enjoy it : let no artifice
Deceive you, but beware of Antony.

ROMANS.

If he speak ill of Cassius, he shall die.

CASSIUS.

Romans, remember these your sacred oaths.

ROMANS.

The friends of Rome shall ever be our care.

SCENE VIII.

ANTONY, ROMANS, DOLABELLA.

First ROMAN.

But Antony appears.

Second

Second ROMAN.

What can he dare

To offer?

First ROMAN.

See, his eyes are bath'd in tears;

Hark, how he sighs, he's deeply troubled.

Second ROMAN.

O,

He lov'd him but too well.

ANTONY.

I did indeed;

I lov'd him, Romans, wou'd have giv'n my life
To save my friend's; and who amongst you all
Wou'd not have dy'd for Cæsar, had you known,
Like me, his virtues? to the laws he fell
A noble sacrifice: I come not here
To gild his mem'ry with a flatt'ring tale,
The world was witness to his deeds, the world
Proclaims his glory; I but ask your pity,
And beg you to forgive the tears of friendship.

First ROMAN.

Cassius, you might have shed them for your country,
For Rome in slav'ry; Cæsar was a hero,
But Cæsar was a tyrant too.

Second ROMAN.

A tyrant

Cou'd

Cou'd have no virtues : Cæffius was our friend,
And fo was Brutus.

ANTONY.

I have nought to urge
Against his murtherers ; they meant, no doubt,
To ferve the ftate ; whilst gen'rous Cæfar pour'd
His bounties on their heads, they fhed his blood ;
But, had he not been guilty, Rome wou'd ne'er
Have acted thus, he muft have been to blame :
And yet, did Cæfar ever make you groan
Beneath his pow'r ? did he opprefs his country ?
Did he referve the fruit of all his conquelts
But for himfelf, or did you fhare the fpoil ?
Were not the treasures of the conquer'd world
Laid at your feet, and lavifh'd all on you ?
When he beheld his weeping countrymen,
From his triumphal car he wou'd defcend.
To footh their griefs, and wipe their tears away.
What Cæfar fought for, Rome in peace enjoys ;
Rich by his bounty, by his virtues great ;
He paid the fervice and forgot the wrongs
Which he receiv'd ; immortal gods ! you knew
His heart was ever ready to forgive.

ROMANS.

Cæfar was always merciful.

ANTO-

ANTONY.

Alas!

Cou'd his great soul have ever stoop'd to vengeance
 He yet had liv'd, and we had still been happy.
 Not one of all his murtherers but shar'd
 His bounties; twice had he preserv'd the life
 Of Cassius — Brutus — horrible to think!
 O, heav'n! my friends, I shudder at the crime,
 The base affassin, Brutus, was — his son.

ROMANS.

His son! ye gods!

ANTONY.

I see, it shocks your souls,
 I see the tears that trickle down your cheeks:
 Yes; Brutus is his son: but you, my friends,
 You were his children, his adopted sons:
 O, had ye seen his will!

ROMANS.

What is it? tell us.

ANTONY.

Rome is his heir; his treasures are your own,
 And you will soon enjoy them: O, he wish'd
 To serve his Romans, ev'n beyond the grave:
 'Twas you alone he lov'd, for you had gone
 To sacrifice his fortune and his life

In

In Asia's plains: O, Romans, oft he cry'd,
 You are my sov'reigns, I am the world's master,
 And you are mine. Cou'd Brutus have done more,
 Or Cassius?

ROMANS.

We detest them.

First ROMAN.

Cæsar was

The father of his country.

ANTONY.

But he's gone;

Your father is no more: the pride, the glory
 Of human nature, the delight of Rome,
 Cut off by vile Assassins; shall he go
 Unhonour'd, undistinguish'd to the tomb?
 Shall we not raise the fun'ral pile to one
 So dear, the father, and the friend of Rome?
 Behold, they bring him here.

[The further part of the stage opens, and discovers the lictors carrying the body of Cæsar, cover'd with a bloody robe; Antony descends from the rostrum, and kneels down near the body.

ROMANS.

O dreadful fight!

ANTONY.

Behold the poor remains of Cæsar! once
 The first of men, that god whom you ador'd,

Whom

Whom ev'n his murth'ers lov'd, your best support,
In peace your guardian, and in war your glory,
Who made whole nations tremble, and the world
Bow down before him: is this he, ye Romans,
This bleeding corse, is this the mighty Cæsar?
Mark but his wounds: *here Cimber pierc'd him, there
The perjur'd Cassius, and there Decimus;
There, with unnat'ral hand, the cruel Brutus
Deep plung'd the fatal poniard: Cæsar look'd
Towards his murth'rer, with an eye of love
And mild forgiveness, as he sunk in death
He call'd him by the tender name of son;
My child, he cry'd —

First ROMAN.

The monster! O that heav'n
Had ta'en him hence before this fatal deed!

[The people croud round the body,
The blood still flows.

ANTONY.

O! it cries out for vengeance:
From you demands it: hearken to the voice;

* The reader will perceive how closely Voltaire has here follow'd Shakespear, and at the same time must observe how inferior the copy is to the great original.

Awake, ye Romans, hence, and follow me
Against these vile Assassins; the best tribute
That we can pay to Cæsar's memory,
Is to extirpate these usurpers: haste,
And with the torch that lights his fun'ral pile
Set fire to ev'ry traitors house, and plunge
Your daggers in their breasts: away, my friends,
Let us avenge him; let us offer up
These bloody victims to the gods of Rome.

ROMAN.

We follow thee, and swear by Cæsar's blood
To be reveng'd: away.

ANTONY.

[to Dolabella.

We must not let
Their anger cool, the multitude we know
Is ever wav'ring, fickle, and inconstant:
We'll urge them to a war, and then perhaps
Who best revenges Cæsar may succeed him.

END of the THIRD and last ACT.



A M E L I A:

OR, THE

DUKE OF FOIX.

A

T R A G E D Y.

Represented in December, 1752.



P R E F A C E.

THIS tragedy is founded on historical truth.

A Duke of Britany, in the year 1387, commanded the lord of *Bavalan* to assassinate the constable of *Gliffon* : *Bavalan*, the day after, told the duke it was done : the duke becoming sensible of the horror of his crime, and apprehensive of the fatal consequences of it, abandon'd himself to the most violent despair ; *Bavalan*, after giving him time to repent, at length told him that he had lov'd him well enough to disobey his orders, &c.

The action is transported to another age and country for particular reasons.

D R A-

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

The DUKE of FOIX.

AMELIA.

VAMIR, Brother to the Duke of Foix.

LISOIS.

THAIS, Confidant of Amelia.

EMAR, Friend of Vamir.

SCENE, the PALACE of the DUKE of FOIX.

AMELIA:

A M E L I A :
OR, THE
DUKE OF FOIX.
A
T R A G E D Y.

ACT I. SCENE I.

AMELIA, LISOIS.

LISOIS.

PErmit a soldier, in this seat of war,
To steal a moment from the battle's rage,
And greet the fair Amelia; to the king
Thy noble heart is bound, I know, by ties
Of dearest friendship; long and faithfully
Hath Lisois serv'd the valiant duke of Foix
Who holds thee here a pris'ner: well I know
The violence of his passion for Amelia,

Foresee

Foresee the dreadful consequence, and come,
With all the warmth of friendship, to advise
And to consult, to lay my heart before thee,
Perhaps 'tis not unworthy of thy notice.

A M E L I A.

The seal of truth is ever on thy lips,
I know thy firm integrity; whate'er
Thou say'st, I shall believe.

L I S O I S.

Know then, tho' long
I've serv'd the duke with most unwearied zeal,
Through years of peril, and unnumber'd toils,
Yet cou'd I ne'er approve the fatal league
That bound him to the Moor, and took from France
The noblest of her princes; in these days
Of public discord, I have rang'd myself
Beneath no banners but what honour rais'd,
And follow'd but the dictates of my heart:
Not that, the slave of prejudice, my soul
Is blind to all the errors of a friend;
With grief I see the duke's impatient warmth,
Th' impetuous ardor of his boiling youth,
I cannot shut my eyes against his follies:
Oft times the torrent which I strive to stop

Mocks my weak pow'r, and throws down all before it ;
But he has virtues that will recompense
His worst of faults : if we must follow none
But perfect princes, whose unbiass'd hearts
Are free from ev'ry vice, and ev'ry weakneis,
Whom shall we serve ? I love the duke ; and yet
'Tis with regret I draw the hostile sword
'Gainst France : I wish he cou'd be reconcil'd.

AMELIA.

If that cou'd e'er be done, thy influence best
Might reunite them : if he loves his glory,
Sure this misguided prince will listen to thee.
How fatal has his error been !

LISOIS.

In vain

I've try'd to bend his haughty spirit ; oft
Have I with harsh unwelcome truths attack'd him,
And sorely pierc'd his heart : but thou alone
Can'st bring him to his duty, and his king :
That was my errand here : there was a time
When on the fair Amelia I had plac'd
My hopes of bliss ; without abasement then
I thought you might have listen'd to my vows ;
But heav'n reserv'd thee for a nobler fate.

Whilst I was absent, by the cruel Moors
Thou wert enslav'd; the happy conqu'ror came,
The gallant Foix, and sav'd thee from their rage;
His was the glory, his be the reward:
His claims are strong, his youth, his rank, and pow'r,
His fame, and services, all plead for him;
Amelia's justice and her gratitude
Must bind her to him: I have no pretence,
And therefore I am silent; but if merit
Cou'd make thee mine, I wou'd dispute the prize
Ev'n with the sons of kings, nor yield Amelia
To any but to him: he is my master,
My leader, and my friend; he loves me well:
I am not a half proud half virtuous lover,
But what I still wou'd litigate with pow'r,
I give to friendship: nay, I can do more,
I can subdue the weakness of my heart,
And plead a rival's cause; point out the path
Of glory to thee, shew thee what is due
To that illustrious hero who preserv'd thee,
By whom thou liv'st: I can behold unmov'd,
And with unenvying eye, thy charms bestow'd
On him who best deserves them: take my heart
Between you, and accept my honest service,
This arm shall fight for both; I sacrifice

My

My passions to your int'rest: friendship bids me,
And I obey; my country too commands:
Remember, if the prince is yours, he soon
Will be the king's.

AMELIA.

Thy virtues, noble youth,
Astonish me; thou giv'st th'admiring world
A rare example; canst thou be sincere?
And sure thou art so, thus to conquer love,
And give up all to friendship! all who know
Must wonder at thee: thou hast serv'd thy master,
And canst not be an enemy to mine:
A heart so gen'rous sure must think with me:
'Tis not in soul's like thine to hate their king.
Shall I then ask one favour at thy hands?

LISOIS.

Amelia's orders shall be ever sacred:
Command, and I obey.

AMELIA.

Thy gen'rous counsel
Hath urg'd me to accept a noble rank
I look'd not for, and offer'd by a prince:
The choice, I own, does honour to Amelia,
When I reflect, that, long before he told

His love, he fav'd my liberty and life ;
Foe to his sov'reign, tho' the rebel Moor
Hath drawn him from his duty and allegiance,
Yet he has pour'd so many favors on me,
I cannot bear to hurt him, tho', in spite
Of all his goodness, and my gratitude,
I must refuse him: his unhappy passion
Afflicts me ; 'tis distressful to my heart,
For all his kindness thus to make him wretched.
Fain wou'd I spare myself th'ungrateful task
Of saying that I must not hear his vows :
It is not for my feeble voice to tell
A prince his duty ; 'twere a dangrous pow'r,
And I am far from wishing to enjoy it ;
Who can direct him better than thyself ?
Alas ! my lord, 'tis not a time for love ;
The royal army at our gates, and nought
But war and slaughter all around us : blood
On every side ! himself against my master,
Against his brother, now in arms ; all these
Are pow'rful reasons : O, my lord, in you
Is all my hope ; forgive me ; O complete
The gen'rous work, restore me to my king ;
Let him do that, 'tis all I ask ; but add
This effort more to what thou'st done already :

Thou hast the strongest influence o'er his heart,
A firm and manly soul ; a friend like thee,
Respected and belov'd, will make the voice
Of duty heard, his counsels will be laws.

LISOIS.

Alas ! those counsels will have little weight
Against the passions that possess his soul ;
His fiery temper gives me too much cause
To fear him : he's inclin'd to jealousy,
And if he hears I had a thought of thee,
'Twill drive his soul to madness, and perhaps
Undo us all : he must be sooth'd by art ;
Leave him to me, and try to reconcile
Your jarring int'rests ; weigh his offers well.
Henceforth I'll think no more of love and thee,
But get me to the field, the soldier's duty
Shall there engross me : if thou lov'st thy country,
If France be dear to thee, restore her hero,
And she will bless thee for the deed : farewell.

SCENE II.

AMELIA, THAIS.

AMELIA.

Restore him, said he? what! at the dear price
Of all my happiness! it cannot be;
'Twere infamous and base, the worst of crimes.

THAIS.

But wherefore is the prince thus hateful to you?
Why in these days of discord, war, and tumult,
Whilst faction reigns, and on our royal race
Brother 'gainst brother arms, and ev'ry hour
Brings new afflictions, wherefore shou'd Amelia,
Whose gentler stars for other purposes
Had form'd her soul, to love and to be lov'd,
Why shou'd Amelia, with such sentiments
Of scorn and hatred, meet a hero's vows
Who had aveng'd her cause? The prince, thou know'st,
Amongst his ancestors can boast the blood
Of our first kings, and is himself a lord
Of rich domains, and wide-extended pow'r.
He loves you, offers you his hand: can rank
And title, objects that are envy'd still
By all mankind, pursued with eagerness,

And

And gain'd with rapture, can these only fill
Thy heart with sorrow, and thy eyes with tears?

AMELIA.

Because he sav'd me once, has he a right
Now to oppress me? Must Amelia fall
A victim to his fatal aid? I know
I'm much indebted to him, wou'd I were not!

THAIS.

Nay, that's ungrateful.

AMELIA.

Thou shalt know my heart,
My miseries, my duty, and my fate:
I will no longer keep the secret from thee,
'Twere cruel to distrust thee; when thou know'st
My story, thou may'st justify thy friend.
I must not listen to the prince's vows,
For know, my heart is given to his brother.

THAIS.

Ha! to the noble Vamir!

AMELIA.

Yes, my friend:
With mutual oaths we seal'd our mutual faith,
And at Leucate I expected him,

There to confirm it at the holy altar,
When by the cruel Moors that rush'd upon us
I was surpris'd, and made a captive ; then
The prince, to their unconquer'd savages
In firm alliance bound, appear'd, and sav'd me ;
'There's my distress : the life another sav'd
Must be devoted to the faithful Vamir.

THAIS.

But why then thus conceal thy passion ? why
Nourish a hopeless flame thou shoud'st extinguish ?
He wou'd respect this sacred tie, and check
His fruitless passion.

AMELIA.

O I must not tell him :

The brothers, to compleat my sorrows, arm'd
Against each other, have ta'en different parties
In this destructive war ; the faithful Vamir
Fights for his king. Thou know'st the violence
Of his proud rival : all I can oppose
To his fierce rage is melancholy silence ;
Ev'n yet he knows not that in happier times
The gallant Vamir had engag'd my heart :
To tell it him wou'd fire his jealous soul,
And only make Amelia more unhappy.
'Tis time to quit this fatal place, the king

With

With pleasure will receive me : let us hence,
The prisoners, Thais, from these walls ev'n now
Are breaking forth, and meditate their flight :
They will conduct us : I defy all danger,
Will hazard all for freedom and repose.

THAIS.

Behold the Duke.

AMELIA.

I cannot speak to him,
The starting tear wou'd soon betray me : what
Wou'd I not give for ever to avoid him !

SCENE III.

DUKE of FOIX, LISOIS, THAIS.

DUKE.

[to Thais.

Avoid me ! fly me ! Thais, stay : thou know'st
My sorrows, know'st I love her to distraction ;
My life depends on her : but let her not
Abuse her pow'r, and drive me to despair :
I hate her cold respect, her poor return
Of gratitude to all my warmth of passion :
Delay is cruel, 'tis the worst refusal ;
'Tis an affront my heart will ne'er forgive :
In vain she boasts to me her loyal zeal,
Her fond attachments to her royal master,

'Tis time that all thou'd yield to love and me :
 Here let her find her country and her king ;
 To me she owes her honour, and her life ;
 And I owe all to her, I owe my love :
 United as we are by ev'ry claim,
 We must not part, the altar is prepar'd,
 She shall be mine ; go, tell her all is ready,

S C E N E IV.

The DUKE, LISOIS.

LISOIS.

My lord, remember that our kingdom's safety
 Depends on this decisive day.

DUKE.

I know it
 And am resolv'd to conquer or to die
 Amelia's husband.

LISOIS.

But the foe advances,
 And soon will be upon us.

DUKE.

Let him come,
 I mean to fight him ; think'st thou I'm a coward ?
 Think'st thou the tyrant love shall e'er extinguish
 My noble thirst of glory ? though she hates,
 She shall admire me still : she boasts indeed

Her

Her sov'reign empire o'er my captive heart,
 But shall not blast my virtue and my fame.
 No: thy reproaches are unjust, my friend
 Was too severe; condemn me not unjustly,
 Love ne'er unnerves the gallant sons of France:
 Ev'n from the bosom of success and joy,
 Fearless they fly to arms, and rush on death:
 And I too will die worthy of Amelia.

LISOIS.

Say rather, worthy of thyself: I think
 To day of nothing but the public welfare;
 I talk of battles, and thou speak'st of love.
 My lord, I've seen the army of the foe:
 Vamir, so fame reports, is arm'd against us:
 From us, I know, he hath long since withdrawn
 His valiant troops, I know him not, but hear
 He's of a noble nature: if his soul,
 Inspir'd by duty, and by glory warm'd,
 Still feels the tender tie that link'd your hearts
 In earlier years, he may assist us now,
 And be the means of making wish'd-for peace.
 My cares ———

DUKE.

Away: I wou'd not be oblig'd
 Thus to a brother: shall I sue for peace,

Entreat

And ask forgiveness? yet it hurts my soul
To think that Vamir is my foe: I still
Remember our past friendship, and the love
I bore him once; but since he will oppose me,
Since he's no longer ours, why let him go,
And serve his king.

LISOIS.

Thy fiery temper braves
Too far the patience of an easy monarch.

DUKE.

A monarch! the mere phantom of a king,
Unworthy of his race, a royal slave,
In golden chains, and seated on a throne
Subjected to a petty officer:
I'm not afraid of Pepin their arch-tyrant;
I hate a subject that would frighten me,
And I despise a king who can't command:
If he permits a rebel to usurp
The sov'reign pow'r, I'll still support my own:
This heart's too proud to bend beneath the laws
Of these new upstarts who oppress their king:
Clovis, my royal ancestor, ne'er taught
His sons to cringe beneath a haughty master,
At least these faithful Arabs will revenge me;
If I must feel a tyrant, let him be
A stranger.

LISOIS.

LISOIS.

You detest these* governors,
 But they have sav'd our empire, which your friends,
 The Arabs, but for them had overthrown :
 I tremble at this new alliance : Spain
 Before you stands a terrible example :
 These savage plund'ers, these new tyrants dig
 Our graves with our own hands. 'Twere better far
 To yield with prudence.

DUKE.

What, fall down and sue
 For mercy !

LISOIS.

Your true int'rest long forgotten——

DUKE.

Revenge is my first int'rest.

LISOIS.

Love and anger

Too long have rul'd the bosom of my friend.

DUKE.

I know they have, but cannot conquer nature.

* The original is '*vous haïssez un Maire*' literally translated you hate a *Mayor*. *Maire* may perhaps sound very well in a *French* ear, but in *English* it is rather unpoetical, and so far beneath the dignity of the *Buskin*, that I am not certain whether the single word *Mayor*, repeated two or three times, wou'd not throw an air of ridicule over a whole scene, and perhaps contribute in a great measure to damn a modern tragedy.

LISOIS.

LISOIS.

You may, you ought; nay, I'll not flatter you,
But ev'n, tho' I condemn, I'll follow thee;
'Tis a friend's duty to point out the faults
Of him he loves; to counsel, to exhort,
To save him from the dang'rous precipice:
This I have done for thee, but thou wilt fall,
And I must perish with thee.

DUKE.

O my friend,

What hast thou said?

LISOIS.

But what I ought to say:
And wou'd to heav'n that thou had'st listen'd to me!
What dost thou purpose?

DUKE.

When my ardent hopes
Shall be fulfill'd, when the ungrateful maid
Shall give sweet peace to my distracted mind,
Then will I hear the counsels of my friend.
What can I purpose now, or what design,
Till I have seen the tyrant who must guide
My future fate? let her determine for me,
Let her save me, and I will save my country.

END of the FIRST ACT.

A C T

ACT II. SCENE I.

The DUKE of FOIX alone.

She cannot fure again refuse to fee me,
And urge me to despair ! she dare not do it :
Fool that I am to give her thus the pow'r,
How weak is my proud heart to yield itself
A voluntary slave ! go, throw thyself,
Mean as thou art, beneath the tyrant's feet ;
Go, make thy life dependant on a word,
A look, a smile, from proud Amelia ; pass
From love to fury, and from tears to rage ;
'Tis the last time I e'er will speak to her.
I go ———

SCENE II.

The DUKE, AMELIA, and THAIS, who advance
from the upper end of the stage.

AMELIA.

There's hope, my Thais ; yet I tremble.
Wou'd Vamir hazard this bold enterprise ?
'Tis full of danger ; ha ! what do I see ?

[advancing towards the Duke.

DUKE.

Amelia, what hath this way led thy steps
I know not, but thy eyes too plainly tell me

That

That I was not the object of their search :
 What ! still turn from me, still insult the heart
 That dotes upon thee ! cruel tyrant, thus
 To blast the laurels planted on my brow :
 O if Amelia's hand had plac'd them there
 They might have flourish'd, but she has forgot
 Her plighted faith, and broke her flatt'ring promise.

A M E L I A.

Thou never hadst my faith, I never gave
 Thee promise, gratitude is all I owe thee.

D U K E.

Did I not offer thee my hand ?

A M E L I A.

Thou didst :

It was an honour which I cou'd not merit,
 And which I never sought, but I receiv'd it
 With due respect ; you thought, no doubt, a rank
 So glorious must have dazzled poor Amelia.
 At length, my lord, 'tis time to undeceive you ;
 I do it with regret, because I know
 It will offend you, but I must be plain :
 In short, my lord, I love my king too well
 To think of wedding with his foe : thy blood

I know

I know, is noble; mine is spotless yet,
Nor will be stain'd with foul disloyalty,
And I inherit from my ancestors
The fix'd abhorrence of my country's foes :
Nor will I e'er acknowledge for a master
The friend of tyrants, be he e'er so great :
Such is my firm resolve ; perhaps, my lord,
It may seem harsh, but you oblig'd me to it.

DUKE.

This is a language, madam, which I own
I look'd not for ; I never cou'd have thought
That angry heav'n, to make me doubly wretched,
Wou'd choose Amelia for its instrument
Of vengeance : you have study'd long in secret
The arts of black ingratitude, of scorn
And insult, and now open all your heart.
I was a stranger to this patriot zeal,
This most heroic ardor for thy country,
This fetch of policy ; but tell me, madam,
Whom have you here but this insulted lover,
The injur'd Foix, to succour and support you ?
Thou hast reproach'd me with my new alliance,
Those faithful friends on whom I here rely
For all my safety, and for all my pow'r :
Without their aid thou had'st been still a captive ;

To

To them you ow'd your liberty and life,
And am I thus rewarded?

A M E L I A.

You prolong'd
My wretched days ; but are they therefore yours,
And may I not dispose them as I please?
Did you preserve me but to make me wretched,
To be a tyrant o'er the life you sav'd?

D U K E.

Ungrateful woman, thou deserv'st the name
Of tyrant most, for now I read thy soul,
See thro' the thin disguise, behold too plainly
My own dishonour, and thy treach'rous falsehood:
I know thou lov'st another, but whoe'er
He be that thus hath robb'd me of thy heart,
Fear thou my love, and tremble at my rage;
For, if he be on earth, I'll find the traitor,
And tear him from thee: if amidst its horrors
My soul cou'd feel one momentary joy,
'Twou'd be to make thee wretched.

A M E L I A.

No: my lord,
Indeed it wou'd not; reason will forbid it:
Thy soul's too noble to oppress with woe
A life which thou had'st sav'd; but if thy heart

Shou'd

Shou'd ever stoop so low, thy virtues still,
Thy goodness in my memory shall live,
And only thy unkindness be forgotten.
I pity, and forgive thee; thou wilt blush
Hereafter at the thought of inj'ring me;
Spite of thy threats, my soul is yet unmov'd,
Nor dreads thy anger, nor defies thy pow'r.

DUKE.

Forgive the transports of a mind disturb'd,
The rage of love embitter'd by despair;
Lifois, I find, holds secret conf'rence with you,
Abetts your falsehood, and defends your conduct;
Leans to the royal party, and combines
In vain with you to make a convert of me:
It seems I'm to be govern'd by your will,
And not my own: your converse is the same,
The same your purpose; but why use these arms
Against me? to persuade my easy heart,
Why must Amelia seek a stranger's aid?
A word will win me, if 'tis spoke by love.

AMELIA.

My heart, I own, hath open'd to thy friend
Its hopes and fears, but he hath done much more
Than he had promis'd: pity then my tears,
Pity my sorrows, be thyself again;

Subdue

Subdue a passion which Amelia must not,
 Cannot return : accept my gratitude,
 'Tis all I have to give thee.

DUKE.

Lisais then,
 And he alone, enjoys thy confidence,
 Thy friendship, more perhaps ; I see it now.

A M E L I A.

You may perhaps hereafter, but at present
 You have no right, sir, to controul my thoughts,
 My actions, or my words ; no right to blame me,
 Or to complain : I sought thy friend's assistance,
 And he has giv'n it me ; I wish, my lord,
 That you wou'd learn to act and think like him.

S C E N E III.

The Duke alone.

'Tis well : this base ungrateful perjur'd woman,
 Without a blush, confesses all her falsehood ;
 The myst'ry is unfolded now : one friend,
 One only friend, I had, and he destroys me.
 Friendship ! vain phantom, unsubstantial shade,
 So often fought for, and so seldom found,
 Thou ever hadst some wholesome draught to pour
 Into my cup of sorrow ; but at last

Thou

Thou too, like love, hast cruelly deceiv'd me !
For the reward of all my errors past
I have but this, that no allurements now,
No flatt'ring pleasures, henceforth shall betray me ;
For from this hour I will be fond—of nothing.
But lo the traitor comes with cruel hand
To tear my wounds, and make them bleed afresh.

S C E N E I V .

LISOIS.

My lord, I come obedient to your orders :
But why that frown, those eyes of discontent
That scowl upon me ? has thy soul, long time
The sport of passion, weigh'd in reason's scale
Thy int'rest, and thy happiness ?

DUKE.

It has.

LISOIS.

And what was the result ?

DUKE.

My eyes are open'd
To falsehood and deceit ; I've learn'd to find
A rival and a traitor in my friend.

LISOIS.

How's that !

DUKE.

It is enough.

LISOIS.

LISOIS.

Too much, my lord :
Who is the traitor ?

DUKE.

Can'st thou ask me who ?
Who but thyself was privy to the wrongs
I have receiv'd, who else must answer for them ?
I know, Amelia hath convers'd with thee
Here, in the palace ; when I mention'd thee
She trembled : this affected silence speaks
Your guilt more plainly, and I know not which
Most to abhor, Amelia, or —— my friend.

LISOIS.

Can'st thou yet listen to that friend ?

DUKE.

I can.

LISOIS.

Think'st thou I still am anxious for my fame ?
Dost thou esteem, and can'st thou yet believe me ?

DUKE.

I will : for till this hour I thought thee virtuous,
And held thee for my friend.

LISOIS.

Those noble titles
Have hitherto conducted me thro' life ;

But

But wherefore justify myself to thee?
Thou'ft not deferv'd it: know, Amelia's charms
Long fince had touch'd my heart, before thy hand
Had fet her free, and fav'd her precious life,
But by the ties of gratitude fhe's thine ;
Thou haft deferv'd her by thy fervices :
For me, I'm more the foldier than the foft
And tender lover ; I defpife the art
Of bafe feduction, fit for courts alone,
And flatt'ry's fmooth perfidiousnefs ; my foul
Is made of firmer ftuff: I talk'd indeed
Of marriage to her ; and that fabled tie,
Knit by efteem and fair equality
Of fortune and condition, might have made her
More happy far than rank and titles cou'd,
That ftand upon a dang'rous precipice :
But yesternight, you know, I vifited
Your ramparts, when your jealous foul alarm'd
Discover'd all its paffion : I observ'd it :
To day I faw the object of your grief,
Your lov'd Amelia, and beheld her charms
With eyes of cold indiff'rence: o'er myfelf
I gain'd an eafy conqueft: I did more,
Pleaded for thee, for an ungrateful friend,
And urg'd a paffion which I can't approve ;

Recall'd

Recall'd the mem'ry of thy bounties past,
 Thy glory and thy rank, acknowledg'd faults
 I knew you had, and number'd all your virtues;
 All this against myself I did for thee;
 For my friend's happiness gave up my own:
 And if the sacrifice is still imperfect,
 Shew me the rival that still dares t'oppose thee,
 And I will stake my life to do thee justice.

D U K E.

My friend, thou fear'st above me; I am fall'n,
 Abash'd, confounded: who cou'd see Amelia
 And not adore her? but to conquer thus
 Thy passion! O, thou never cou'dst have lov'd her.

L I S O I S.

I did: but love, like other passions, acts
 With diff'rent force on diff'rent minds.

D U K E.

I love

Too well, my friend, and cannot imitate
 The virtue I admire: my foolish heart——

L I S O I S.

I ask not for thy praises, but thy love;
 And if thou think'st that I have merited
 Aught at thy hands, O do but serve thyself,

Thy.

Thy happiness is Lisois' best reward.
Thou seest with what determin'd hate thy brother
Pursues the Moor, I dread the consequence :
The people groan beneath this foreign yoke,
Soon, I foresee, the empire will unite
Their scatter'd pow'rs, new enemies still rise
Against us, the pure blood of Clovis still
Is worshipp'd by the croud, and soon or late
The branches of this sacred tree, that long
Have bent beneath the storm, again shall rise,
Spring with fresh verdure, and o'ershade the land.
Plac'd by thy rank and fortunes near the throne,
Long time thou wer't thy king and country's friend ;
But in the days of public discord, fate
Attach'd thee to another cause ; perhaps
New int'rests now may call for new connections,
And what united may dissolve the tie ;
The pow'r of these despotic governors
May be restrain'd, and weaken'd by thy hand——

DUKE.

I wish it were so : think'st thou then Amelia
Wou'd listen to me ? if I shou'd embrace
The royal party, might she still be mine ?

LISOIS.

I am a stranger to Amelia's heart :

But what are her designs, her views to thee ?
Must love alone decide the nation's fate ?
In Touraine's field, when gallant Clovis fought,
And, o'er the haughty conquerors of Rome
Victorious, stopp'd the bloody Arian's hand,
That dealt destruction round us, did he save
His country, think'st thou, but to please a mistress ?
This arm against a rival is prepar'd
To serve my friend, but I wou'd serve him more,
Wou'd cure him of this fond destructive passion ;
This love deceives us, we're too fearful of him ;
We wound ourselves, and lay the blame on him ;
The coward's tyrant, and the hero's slave ;
He may be conquer'd : Lifois has subdu'd him,
And shall he triumph o'er the blood of kings
Who never yet submitted to a foe ?
Awake, my friend, and be our great example
In ev'ry virtue !

D U K E.

Yes, I will do all,
All for Amelia : she must yield at last.
Her laws, her king, her master, shall be mine :
I have no will but her, and in her eyes
Will read my duty, and my fate : possess'd
Of the dear treasure, will be reconcil'd

To ev'ry foe. O how my heart enjoys
The pleasing hope! I had no cause to fear,
I have no rival: if thou art not lov'd,
I can have none: who in this court wou'd dare
To cast one look towards Amelia? now
Her vain pretexs are vanish'd: reason, glory,
My int'rest, and my birth, the sacred right
Of my great ancestors, all all unite
To bind the nuptial chain, and make me happy.
Henceforth I am the king's, and will support him;
So virtue bids, and beauty has commanded.
On this blest day will I confirm the oaths
I made to love: away, my friend, I leave
My int'rest and my fortunes to thy care.

LISOIS.

Permit me then, my lord, to seek the king:
I cou'd have wish'd that this important change
Were to the hero not the lover due;
But be it as it may, th'effect's too glorious
To blame the cause: I triumph in thy weakness,
And bless for once the lucky pow'r of love.

S C E N E V.

The DUKE, LISOIS, an OFFICER.
OFFICER.

My Lord, the foe advances ; we expect
A fierce assault, and wait your orders ; time
Is precious.

D U K E.

Cruel fate ! to counteract
My noble purpose ! then farewell to peace,
And welcome, vict'ry ! I'll deserve Amelia :
I heed not these rash fools : of all the foes
I have to conquer, there's but one to fear,
And that's — Amelia.

END of the SECOND ACT.

A C T III. S C E N E I.

DUKE of FOIX, LISOIS.

D U K E.

THE day is ours ; thanks to thy friendly hand
That guided my rash youth ; thy noble soul,
In peace or war, is my best counsellor.

LISOIS.

LISOIS.

The glorious fire that animates thy heart
Must always conquer, when 'tis check'd by prudence,
As here it was : preserve this happy virtue,
'Twill make thee happy, and 'twill make thee great ;
The coward's restless, but the hero, calm.

DUKE.

How is the lover ? can he ever taste
Of sweet tranquility ? But say, my friend,
This unknown chief, that mounted on our ramparts,
And with his single arm so long suspended
The doubtful vict'ry : I grew jealous of him :
Where is he ? what became of him ?

LISOIS.

Surrounded

By slaughter'd friends, alone long time he stood,
And brav'd opposing legions ; but what most
Surpris'd us, when at length he had escap'd
From ev'ry danger, wond'rous to relate !
He yielded up himself a pris'n'er to us ;
Conceals his rank and name, accuses heav'n,
And begs for instant death. One friend alone
Attends him, and partakes his sorrow s.

D U K E.

Lisois,

Who can this bold this fearless foldier be?
He wore his beaver down : some secret charm
O'erpower'd my trembling soul when I oppos'd him.
Whether this fatal passion that enslaves me
Hath spread its weakness o'er each faculty,
And left the soft impression on my soul,
Or that my bleeding country's voice alarm'd
This conscious heart, and silently reproach'd me.

L I S O I S.

As for the weakness of thy soul, advice
I know were vain, but sure thy country's voice
May still be heard ; now is the time to shew
The greatness of thy soul, and give us peace.
Fortune, that smil'd on us to-day, perhaps
May frown to-morrow, and thy pride be forc'd
To sue for pardon to a haughty foe.
Since thou art happy, and Amelia's thine,
Now rest thy glory on the common cause,
This brave unknown may forward our designs ;
Let us improve the lucky moment.

D U K E.

Yes,

My friend, I will do all to serve Amelia,

Her

Her cause is mine : I must prepare the minds
Of my brave followers for the change ; to thee,
And to thy happy counsels, ev'ry bliss,
Glory and peace, and hymenzal joys,
To thee I owe, to friendship and to love.

S C E N E II.

LISOIS, VAMIR, and EMAR at the further end of
the stage.

LISOIS.

It is the noble pris'ner, and his friend,
If I mistake not : this way they advance ;
He seems o'erwhelm'd with deep despair.

VAMIR.

O heav'n !

Where am I ? whether dost thou lead me ?

LISOIS.

Stranger,

Whoe'er thou art, be comforted ; thy fate
Hath thrown thee into noble hands : thou'lt find
A gen'rous master, who can see desert
Ev'n in a foe : may I not ask thy name ?

VAMIR.

I am a poor abandon'd wretch, the sport
Of fortune, one whose least affliction is

To be a captive, and from ev'ry eye
 Wou'd wish to hide the story of my fate :
 It is enough to be supremely wretch'd,
 Without this cruel witness of my woe :
 Too soon my name and sorrows will be known.

L I S O I S.

Respect is due to misery like thine ;
 I will not urge thee further, but retire :
 Perhaps ev'n here thy soul may find relief
 In gen'rous treatment, and a milder fate.

S C E N E III.

VAMIR, EMAR.

VAMIR.

A milder fate ! I must not hope for it :
 O I have liv'd too long.

EMAR.

Thank heav'n, my lord,
 That we are fall'n amongst such noble foes,
 And shall not groan beneath a stranger's pow'r.

VAMIR.

No yoke sometimes so galling as a brother's.

EMAR.

But you were bred together, and the ties
 Of tend'rest friendship link'd your hearts.

VAMIR.

VAMIR

They did:

But O! the friendship of our early years
Soon takes its flight: he lov'd me once, and still
This heart retains a brother's kindness for him;
I cannot hate him, tho' he conquer'd me.

EMAR.

He knows not yet how great a captive comes
To grace his triumph; knows not that a brother
Is in his pow'r, whom vengeance had inspir'd.—

VAMIR.

No: Emar, never did a thought of vengeance
Enter my heart; a diff'rent passion sway'd
The soul of Vamir: can it be, just heav'n!
Or is it but the lying voice of fame,
That my Amelia's false, that she has broke
Her solemn vows? for whom too? added guilt
To her, and double sorrow to thy friend!
The sacred laws of nature, and the ties
Of tender love, all broken, all betray'd!
Unjust, inhuman brother!

EMAR.

Knows he then.

How dear a treasure he hath robb'd thee of

In thy Amelia? did not Vamir say
That he was still a stranger to thy love?

VAMIR.

But she is not: she knows what solemn ties,
What strict engagements, bound us to each other:
That at the altar, e'er we had confirm'd
Our mutual vows, the barb'rous Moor rush'd in,
And tore her from me; the base ravishers
Escap'd my vengeance, and my happier brother
Enjoys the precious treasure Vamir lost.
Ungrateful woman! came I here, my friend,
But to reproach her? what will it avail?
She will not listen to my fond complaint:
But to my royal master I have liv'd
A faithful servant, and to false Amelia,
And faithful will I die: when she shall know
How well I lov'd her, she may shed a tear,
And in a brother's arms lament my fate.

EMAR.

Repress thy sorrows; see, the Duke approaches.

VAMIR.

Be still, my heart.

SCENE

SCENE IV.

DUKE of FOIX, VAMIR, EMAR.

DUKE.

This mystery alarms me :

But I must see this noble captive : ha !

He turns aside with horror.

VAMIR.

Hateful life !

Must I support thee still ? must I again

Behold the faithless wretch ?

DUKE.

What do I hear ?

VAMIR.

Dost thou not know me ?

DUKE.

Ha ! my brother ! Vamir !

VAMIR.

Alas ! too sure I am that wretched brother,
Thy vanquish'd foe, a poor abandon'd captive.

DUKE.

Thou art my brother still, and I forgive thee ;
But 'tis most strange, and most unnatural :
Cou'd the king find no instrument but thee

To execute his vengeance on my head?
What had I gone to Vamir?

VAMIR.

Made his life
Unhappy : wou'd that thou had'st ta'en it from me!

DUKE.

Dreadful effects of civil strife!

VAMIR.

More dreadful
Are the deep wounds that pierce the heart of Vamir.

DUKE.

Against another foe I might have shewn
A soldier's courage, but I pity thee.

VAMIR.

Pity thyself, the wretch who has betray'd
His country, and deceiv'd the king that lov'd him ;
A traitor, and unworthy of thy race.

DUKE.

Brand me not, Vamir, with th' opprobrious name
Of traitor, lest I shou'd forget myself,
And spurn thee for the insult : no, my brother,
I'm not that base ungrateful wretch thou think'st me ;
Thou see'st me ready to restore fair peace,
And heal the wounds of my divided country.

VAMIR.

VAMIR.

Thou heal our wounds ! thou—

DUKE.

Yes : the day that seem'd
So fatal to thy peace shall quench the flames
Of public discord, and unite us all.

VAMIR.

O 'tis a day of sorrow.

DUKE.

Of delight
And joy, the day that crowns my wishes —

VAMIR.

How !

DUKE.

Yes, Vamir, all is chang'd, and I am happy.

VAMIR.

It may be so : I heard indeed thy heart
These three months past has been the slave of love ;
And if report say true, most violent
And fierce thy passion.

DUKE.

Thou hast heard aright ;
I love her ev'n to madness : thou art come
In happy hour to make our bliss complete.
Yes : I will lay my friends, my foes, my ev'ry claim,
Revenge and glory, all beneath her feet.

Go,

Go, tell her two unhappy brothers, long

[to his attendants,

By adverse fate to diff'rent int'rests bound,

Wait but a look from her to be united.

[to Vamir,

Blame not my passion, Vamir, when thou see'st

The lovely object, soon thou wilt approve it.

VAMIR.

[aside,

And does she love thee? cruel thought!

DUKE.

At least

She ought: one obstacle alone remain'd,

And that shall be remov'd,

VAMIR.

[aside,

Inhuman brother!

Know'st thou what led me to this fatal place,

And mean'st thou to insult me?

DUKE.

Let us bury

In deep oblivion ev'ry thought of discord;

Behold, the fair Amelia comes.

SCENE

S C E N E V.

DUKE of FOIX, VAMIR, AMELIA.

AMELIA.

O heav'n !

What do I see? I die.

DUKE.

Amelia, listen,

And mark how happiness ariseth oft
From our misfortunes ; this day I have conquer'd,
And this day found a brother ; thou, my Vamir,
Shalt be a witness to the pow'r of love.

What nor Amelia's pray'rs, nor her reproaches,
My gen'rous friend, my country, and my king,
Long time in vain sollicit'd, her charms
At length have won : to them I yield submissive.
Amelia, whilst I was thy sov'reign's foe,

Thou wou'd'st not listen to my vows : henceforth
I have no laws, no friends, no king, but thine :
So love commands, and love shall be obey'd.

Vamir, thou'rt free : be thou the messenger
Of welcome tidings to the court : away,
And tell the king I hasten to present
His fair ally, the conqueror who subdued
A rebel's heart, and of a dang'rous foe

Hath

Hath made a faithful subject; chang'd by her,
And her alone.

VAMIR.

[aside.

'Tis as I wish'd : my fate
Will soon be known : speak, and pronounce our doom.

DUKE.

Amelia, speak, art thou not satisfy'd
With my submission? Is it not enough
To see a conqueror thus humbly kneel
Before thee? Can my life alone content
Thy cruel heart? take it, ungrateful woman!
I wish'd but to preserve it for thy sake;
For thee alone I liv'd, for thee will die.

A M E L I A.

I am astonish'd, and my fault'ring voice
Will scarce give utterance to my words : — my lord,
If thy great soul laments thy country's fate,
And feels for her distress, thy gen'rous care
Must spring from nobler motives than the wish
To serve Amelia; thou hast heard the voice
Of pow'rful nature : what hath love to do
Where only honour hath a right to dictate?

DUKE.

'Tis thy own work, Amelia, all thy own :
O'er ev'ry int'rest, ev'ry passion, love
Superior reigns; reproach me, cover me

With

With shame, no matter : I must force thy heart ;
Come, to the altar.

VAMIR.

Dar'st thou ———

AMELIA.

No, my lord ;

I'd sooner die : my life's at thy command,
But not my heart : there is a fatal bar
Between us, and I never can be thine.

DUKE.

'Tis well, ungrateful — dost thou hear her, Vamir ?
But I'll be calm : I'll not complain of thee,
I see thee now : the soft persuasive arts
That call our passions forth, the flatt'ring hope
That's giv'n but to betray, the subtle poison
Spred o'er our hearts, deceitful all and vain,
No longer shall seduce my easy faith,
The eye of reason hath detected them,
And the same art that bound hath set me free :
I will not blush before thee, Vamir ; no,
I will not be despis'd : but let me see
This hidden rival, bring him here before me,
And I will yield him up the worthless prize ;
For know, I have contempt enough for both
To wish you were united ; that alone
Shou'd be your punishment.

AMELIA.

A M E L I A.

Perhaps, my lord,

'Twere fittest for Amelia to retire
In silence, but I hold my honour dear,
And must defend it : I have been accus'd
Before your brother, and must answer thee.
Know then, I'm destin'd to another's arms ;
I own my love, my tender passion for him ;
Amelia were unworthy of his heart,
Had she e'er giv'n a distant hope to thee :
But you wou'd seize my faith and liberty,
As if they were by right of conquest thine.
I ow'd thee much, but injuries like these,
My lord, discharge the debt of gratitude,
And cancel all : I saw, and pity'd long
The violence of thy fruitless passion for me ;
Do not then make me hate thee : I rejected
Thy proffer'd vows, but never scorn'd thy love :
I wish'd for thy esteem, and gave thee mine.

D U K E.

Perfidious woman ! nought hast thou deserv'd
But my resentment, which thou soon shalt know
Is equal to my love : you waited then
For Vamir to be witness of my shame !

I shou'd

I shou'd have thought he was himself the traitor,
If — but he ne'er beheld thy fatal charms,
My happier brother never knew Amelia.
Who is this rival? let me know his name,
But think not I will tamely yield to him.
No: I deceiv'd thee there, but cannot long
Dissemble; I will drag thee to the altar,
There, as he dies in torment, shall he see
Our hands united; I will dip in blood
The torch of Hymen: well I know that princes
Have been despis'd for mean and vulgar slaves,
But I shall find him.

VAMIR.

Why shou'd'st thou suppose
This rival so contemptible?

DUKE.

And why
Shou'd'st thou excuse him? Did'st thou never know
her?

'Tis dreadful to conceive it. If thou did'st,
Now, traitor, tremble.

VAMIR.

Vamir tremble? No:
Too long already I have born in silence
Thy cruel insults; know me now, barbarian,

Know

Know a despair that's equal to thy own :
Strike here ; behold thy brother, and thy rival.

DUKE.

'Thou, Vamir, thou ?

VAMIR.

Yes : for these two years past

We've been united in the strictest bonds
Of tender love ; the only good on earth
I wish'd to keep, thy cruel hand hath strove
To ravish from me, made my life unhappy :
Judge of my mis'ries by thy own : we both
Are jealous, both were born the slaves of passion :
Hatred and love, resentment, and despair,
Possess our souls, and all in the extreme :
Thou wert my rival, therefore I oppos'd thee :
Furious and blind, I ran, I flew to save
The object of my love ; not all thy pow'r
Refrain'd me, nor my weakness, time nor place,
Not ev'n thy noble courage ; love prevail'd
O'er friendship, and the ties of blood : be thou
Cruel like me, like me unnatural,
Whilst I have life, thou never can'st enjoy
Thy conquest, never can'st possess Amelia :
Strike then and punish, shed thy brother's blood ;

But

But when thou dragg'st her with thee to the altar,
Remember, she's thy sister, and my wife.

DUKE.

Guards, seize the traitor, take him from my sight.

AMELIA.

Stay, cruel prince; art thou inflexible,
Deaf to the voice of nature; O, my lord!

VAMIR.

Sue not for me, Amelia, Vamir's fate
Is to be envy'd: he most claims your pity
Who hath betray'd his king, and injur'd thee:
I am reveng'd, the victory is mine;
For thou art hated here, and I'm belov'd.

AMELIA. [kneeling to the Duke.

O dearest prince, my lord, see at your feet——

DUKE.

Away with him: rise, madam, for your tears
And fruitless pray'rs to save a traitor's life
But pour fresh poison o'er my wounded heart
That bleeds for thee; but I will die, Amelia,
Not unreveng'd: when thou shalt feel my rage,
Accuse thyself; the work is all thy own.

AMELIA.

A M E L I A.

I cannot leave thee: O, my lord, yet hear ———

DUKE.

If I must hear thee, speak, go on.

S C E N E VI.

The DUKE, VAMIR, AMELIA, LISOIS.
LISOIS.

My lord,
The people are in arms; at Vamir's name
They rose tumultuous, and on ev'ry side
Disorder reigns; th'affrighted soldiers leave
Their colours, and in wild confusion fly:
Mean time the foe unites his scatter'd pow'rs,
And rushes on us.

DUKE.

Go, ungrateful woman!
Thou hast not long to glory in thy crimes;
Follow her —

[to one of her attendants]

I must to the factious croud
And shew myself: thou, Lisois, guard this traitor.

S C E N E VII.

LISOIS.

Art thou a traitor? could'st thou thus disgrace
Thy noble blood, to violate the laws

Of nature ? cou'd a prince so far forget
His duty and himself ?

VAMIR.

I never did :

The people's just : my brother is a rebel,
And has betray'd his master.

LISOIS.

Hear me, Vamir :

My soul desires no greater happiness
Than to unite you : long have I beheld
With deep regret my bleeding country's woes,
Our fields laid waste, and nature sacrific'd
To discord and revenge ; the haughty Moor,
Rais'd on our ruins, menacing the state,
Which we have weaken'd by our own divisions.
O, if thou bear'st a heart that's truly noble,
And worthy of thy race, now save thy country ;
Exert thy pow'r to reconcile the king,
Soften thy brother, and put out the flames
Of civil war.

VAMIR.

Impossible ! thy cares

Are fruitless all and vain : if nought but discord,
Revenge and hatred, led me to the field,
Had glory and ambition fir'd my breast,

Thou

Thou might'st have hoped indeed to re-unite us;
But there's a bar more fatal still behind.

LISOIS.

What cou'd it be ! O tell me, Vamir.

VAMIR.

Love :

Love that has fill'd this breast with savage fury,
And made my brother cruel and inhuman.

LISOIS.

Good heav'n ! that vain caprice shou'd thus destroy
The noblest purposes ! Almighty love,
Can'st thou reverse the laws of nature, fill
With unrelenting hate the jealous hearts
Of fondest brothers, and in ev'ry clime
By private passions work the public ruin ?
Vamir, I feel for both, but long have serv'd
Thy brother ; I must hence, and second him
Against thy factious friends : the strife is dreadful,
And much I fear will have a bloody end ;
But I must fly to succour him : farewell ;
Thou art my pris'ner, but I leave thee here ;
Give me thy word, that shall suffice.

VAMIR.

I do.

LISOIS.

LISOIS.

Wou'd I cou'd knit you in the bonds of peace !
But much more to be fear'd than all thy foes,
And far more fatal, is the tyrant, love.

END of the THIRD ACT.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

VAMIR, AMELIA, EMAR.

AMELIA.

O Vamir, how the hand of heav'n hath mark'd
My life with sad variety of woe !
The chance of war, that tore me from thy arms,
Once more hath join'd us ; but, alas ! we meet
On mournful terms, meet but to part ; my Vamir,
Did'st thou not say it must be so ?

VAMIR.

It must :

Thou see'st me chain'd by honour's laws beneath
A rival's pow'r : my sacred word is giv'n :
Vamir may die, but must not follow thee.

AMELIA.

Thou who hast dar'd to fight, art thou afraid
To flee from him ?

VOL. II.

N

VAMIR.

VAMIR.

I am : my honour binds me :

Take thou advantage of the gen'ral tumult,
Which favors thy retreat : a guard attends
To aid thy flight ; heav'n will protect thy virtues ;
Hope for the best.

A M E L I A .

What can Amelia hope,
When thou art from her ?

VAMIR.

'Tis but for a day.

A M E L I A .

O but that day will be an age to me.
Grant, heav'n ! my tears and terrors may be vain.
The Moor, I know, thirsts for my Vamir's blood ;
Think'st thou thy brother will not give it him ?
He loves with fury, and he hates with rancour ;
His hatred, like his love, is in extreme :
He is thy rival, and the Moor's ally.
I tremble for thee.

VAMIR.

He wou'd never dare ———

A M E L I A .

O his impetuous passion knows no bounds.

VAMIR.

VAMIR.

He must be taught to know them soon ; the king
Comes to revenge us ; half his force already
Throngs to the royal standard ; if thou lov'st me,
Fly, my Amelia, from th' impending storm,
From dreadful slaughter, and the din of arms,
And all the terrors of a bloody field ;
But, above all, avoid my furious rival,
Whose jealous love despis'd, will turn to rage ;
Avoid an insult Vamir must revenge,
Or perish in th' attempt : my dear Amelia,
Hope of my life, the only good on earth
I have to boast, do not expose thyself
To needless dangers, but retire in safety.

AMELIA.

Why wilt thou hazard then thy precious life,
And stay without Amelia ?

VAMIR.

When thou'rt safe,
I shall not fear my brother ; soon perhaps
Vamir may prove his best support : to-day
I am his pris'ner, but perchance to-morrow
May be his patron, and persuade the king
To spare a rebel : to protect my rival

Were noble triumph. Haste, Amelia, leave
This feat of danger.

A M E L I A.

Wheresoever fate

Shall cast my hapless lot, I'll carry with me
My hatred and my love ; 'mid'st ev'ry danger,
In the wild desert, or the gloomy dungeon,
In exile, or in chains, in death itself,
Still shall I think on, still adore my Vamir :
But O ! I cannot bear to live without thee.

V A M I R.

It is too much : thy griefs unman my soul.
What noise was that ? O thou hast staid too long.

S C E N E II.

A M E L I A, V A M I R, DUKE of FOIX, Guards.

D U K E.

I hear his voice ; 'tis he : stay, villain, thou
Who hast betray'd me.

V A M I R.

I betray'd thee not.

Now satiate thy revenge, and take my life ;
Lose not a moment, for the hand of heav'n
Is rais'd against thee : tremble, slave, thy king
Approaches : thou hast conquer'd none but Vamir :
Thy master comes, take heed.

D U K E.

DUKE.

He may revenge,
But cannot save thee ; for thy blood—

AMELIA.

O no,

Amelia's guilty : let Amelia die,
And not my Vamir : I deceiv'd thy guards,
And barter'd with them to assist my flight
From hated slav'ry, and a tyrant's pow'r :
Punish my crimes, but O respect a brother,
Respect thyself, thy own unblemish'd fame :
He ne'er betray'd, but loves and wou'd have serv'd thee,
Ev'n when thy rage had doom'd him to destruction.
What crime has he committed ? none, my lord,
None but the crime of loving his Amelia.

DUKE.

The more thou plead'st for him, the more his guilt :
Thou art his murth'rer : thou, whose fatal charms
Have poison'd all our happiness, and arm'd
Our hands against each other, may the blood
Of both fall on thee ! now thou weep'st, thy tears
No longer shall deceive me : I must die,
But Vamir first shall perish. Yet I love thee,
Ev'n yet thou may'st escape the fatal blow :

N 3

Here

A M E L I A: Or,
Accept my hand, attend me to the altar,
And seal his pardon there.

A M E L I A.

Who, I, my lord?

D U K E.

It is enough.

A M E L I A.

Shall I be false to Vamir?

D U K E

Stop--Answer me.

A M E L I A.

I cannot.

D U K E.

Let him die.

V A M I R.

Amelia, never let his threats o'ercome
Thy noble faith, but love me well enough
To see me perish: leave me to my fate;
Now I shall fall triumphant: shou'd'st thou yield,
Vamir must die by his Amelia's hand.

D U K E.

Guards, drag the traitor to the tow'r: away.

S C E N E III.

D U K E, A M E L I A.

A M E L I A.

And wilt thou make this horrid sacrifice?
Pollute thee with the blood of innocence;
Thou wilt not?

D U K E.

DUKE.

Yes : to hate thee, and to die,

Is all I wish; to see thee more unhappy,

More wretched than myself, to shed the blood

That's dearest to thee, and to make thy days

As full of woe, as was that fatal hour

Which hath destroy'd us all. Away, and leave me,

The sigh h e e distracts me.

S C E N E IV.

DUKE, AMELIA, LISOIS.

From thy justice,

And, that alone, I can expect relief.

Help me to soften this obdurate heart :

Assist me, Lisois.

DUKE.

If thou listen'st to her,

Thou'rt not my friend.

AMELIA.

I call just heav'n to witness.

DUKE.

Hence from my sight : I loath thee.

AMELIA.

Tyrant, go,

For I abhor thee ; spite of all thy rage,

I thought a woman might at least command

Some cold respect : but love, that softens all,

Hath lost its tender influence o'er thy heart :

I leave thee to thy rage ; go, sacrifice

Thy victims, 'midst thy crimes be sure thou count

Amelia's death, and with it count thy own,

For vengeance comes, and in thy punishment

Unites us all ; inglorious shalt thou perish,

And unlamented. Die, inhuman savage ;

And may that hatred, that contempt of thee,

Which now I feel, pursue thy memory,

And after ages execrate thy name !

S C E N E V.

DUKE of FOIX, LISOIS.

DUKE.

Yes, cruel prophet, I expect the doom

Pronounc'd by thee, that discord's fatal hand

Shall seize on all, and join us in the tomb.

LISOIS.

Rage has o'erpower'd him, and his senses fail.

DUKE.

What says my friend ? am I to suffer shame

And insult thus ; and shall my haughty rival

Bear off the false perfidious dear Amelia ?

Wilt thou bear this, or waits't thou till the traitor

Shall raise a pow'rful faction to enslave me ?

LISOIS.

LISOIS.

Too well I see, 'my Lord, the royal party
Hath spread sedition thro' the multitude,
And shook their faith.

DUKE.

Vamir lights up the flame :
He has betray'd us all.

LISOIS.

I never meant
To palliate Vamir's crimes, for much I dread
The fatal consequence ; already France
Is arm'd against us. If the people seek
Their safety in rebellion, all is lost,
Danger's on ev'ry side.

DUKE.

What's to be done ?

LISOIS.

Prevent it ; rage and love must be subdued ;
Then may we conquer all. We must be firm
And resolute ; avoid, or brave the storm :
Do, as thou wilt, my hand is ready still
To aid my friend. This morning thou had'st thought's
Of treating with the king : if thou command'st,
I'll go, my Lord, ev'n now, and sue for peace ;
Or if we try the fortune of the day,

The

The faithful Lisois shall attend thee still :

There, if thou fall'st, thy friend shall not survive thee.

DUKE.

Alone I will descend into the grave :

Live thou, to serve my cause, and to revenge me.

My hour is come, I must fulfil my fate :

Who wishes but for death, is sure to find it ;

But mine shou'd come with all his terrors round him ;

I must have vengeance ; and whene'er I fall,

Will drag my rival with me to the tomb.

LISOIS.

What horrid thoughts are these !

DUKE.

In yonder tow'r

He is confin'd : 'tis under thy command,

And thou did'st promise, that when'er—

LISOIS.

Of whom

Speak'st thou, my lord, a brother ?

DUKE.

No : a traitor,

My worst of foes, a rival who abhors me ;

One who has robb'd me of my dearest treasure :

The Moor demands his head, and I have promis'd

To give it him.

LISOIS.

LISOIS.

Ha ! promis'd to shake off
The bonds of nature and humanity !

DUKE.

Long since they had proscrib'd him.

LISOIS.

And to them,
Thou yield'st his life ?

DUKE.

Not to their vengeance only,
But to my own, which shall be satisfy'd.
What is the Moor to me, or what my country ?

LISOIS.

To love then you wou'd make the sacrifice,
And I must be the executioner.

DUKE.

No : I expect not so much justice from thee ;
I am a wretch, abandon'd and forlorn,
Betray'd by love, deserted by my friend ;
But there are those who yet will keep their promise ;
Others, perhaps, may serve me, nor alledge
Such poor excuses for ingratitude.

LISOIS.

[After a long silence.

I am resolv'd ; and be it guilt or justice,
Ne'er shalt thou say, that Lisois hath betray'd thee :
'Thou art unhappy : Vamir is a traitor.

It is enough ; I love thee, and consent :

There is a time for desperate extremes,

When duties the most sacred must give way

To hard necessity : at such an hour

I cannot suffer thee to try the faith

Of any heart but mine : success alone

Must prove my friendship : soon shalt thou determine

Whether thy Lisois lov'd thee, and was faithful.

DUKE.

Once more in sorrow I behold a friend ;

Deserted by the world, in thee I find

My only refuge: thou wilt not permit

A haughty rival to insult my rage,

To trample on my ashes, and enjoy

My kingdom in the arms of my Amelia.

LISOIS.

I will not : but in recompense for this,

I must demand another sacrifice.

DUKE.

What is it ? speak.

LISOIS.

I cannot bear the Moor,

Our insolent protector ; cannot bear

To see him lord it o'er thy noble subjects.

I wou'd not serve a tyrant, nor submit

To

To shameful slav'ry for a poor support
We do not want; 'tis in our pow'r at least
To die without him: leave to me, my lord,
The conduct of this day, perhaps my service
May claim it of thee: Lisois and the Moor
Wou'd ne'er agree: I must command alone,
To the last hour.

DUKE.

Thou shalt: I'll give thee all

Thou can'st desire, let but Amelia feel
Despair like mine, and weep in tears of blood
Her treach'rous lover: let me hear her groans
In my last moments to delight my soul;
And for the rest, 'tis equal all: to thee
I trust my glory; go, dispose, command,
Prepare thee for the field. I hope not now
For vict'ry, nor for honourable death;
For what is honour to a heart like mine,
Sunk in despair! O, be the sad remembrance
Of a false mistress, and a cruel rival,
Bury'd with me in everlasting silence!

LISOIS.

Eternal night, if possible, shou'd hide
Such dreadful deeds: wou'd death had clos'd our eyes
Before this day of horrors; but I go
To keep my word, and save my friend. Farewell.

END of the FOURTH ACT.

ACT

AMELIA: Or,

ACT V. SCENE I.

DUKE of FOIX, an Officer.

DUKE.

Perpetual mis'ry ! am I doom'd to see
Nothing but faction, treason, and revolt ?
Where are the rebels, do they mutiny ?

OFFICER.

At sight of you, my lord, the croud dispers'd.

DUKE.

On ev'ry side I am oppress'd by Vamir ;
All hearts are his ; my mis'ries are complete :
But what hath Lifois done ?

OFFICER.

His watchful courage
Defends our ramparts 'gainst the foe.

DUKE.

That soldier
You brought to me in secret, has he done
What I commanded ?

OFFICER.

Yes, my lord: e'er now
He's at the tow'r.

DUKE.

'Tis well : a common arm
Will do it best, and execute my vengeance

Without

Without remorse: Lisois' uncertain heart
Was not to be depended on; methought
He look'd with too much coolness on my rage;
We seldom try to mitigate a grief,
Which we contemn: to other hands I'll trust
My great revenge.—Go thou, and fetch my standard,
Let it be brought upon the ramparts to me:
New dangers press, and for the field again
We must prepare: let the same zeal inspire thee,
And the same courage, imitate thy master,
And learn of him—to die,

[Exit. Officer.

E'er this 'tis done.

A base ungrateful woman dips my hands
In brother's blood, and leads me to the tomb:
A guilty murth'rer, ha! what means my heart?
I've nourish'd vengeance long; and shall I not
Enjoy it now? I tremble: and a voice,
Solemn and sad, cries from my inmost soul,
Stop, Foix, he is thy brother, hapless prince,
Call back the murth'rer: Vamir was thy friend.
O sweet remembrance of our infant years,
When in the days of innocence our hearts
Spoke nature's language, and imparted free
Our mutual wishes! O, how oft has Vamir
Partook my griefs, and with a brother's hand,

Wiped

Wiped off the falling tears ! and shall I now
Destroy him ? O thou fatal passion, where,
Where hast thou led me ? sure I was not born
This savage, this barbarian : Vamir yet
Was guilty ; Vamir robb'd me of my life,
In my Amelia : still I am unjust ;
He lov'd ; was that a crime to merit death ?
Alas ! nor time, nor war, nor absence, cool'd
Their faithful passion ; still their guiltless flame
In purest lustre shone, before my heart
Was poison'd by the cruel draught of love :
But Vamir braves my wrath, and is my foe ;
Deceives me, hates me ; yet he is my brother.
He shou'd have liv'd, he was belov'd, and happy,
And only I shou'd perish : I will die
But, as I liv'd, with honour. Pity melts me,
Nature determines, and I will forgive him.
'Tis time—

S C E N E II.

DUKE of FOIX, an Officer.

DUKE.

Prevent a parricide : away,
Haste to the tow'r, reverse my orders ; go,
And let my brother—

OFFICER.

OFFICER.

O my Lord——

DUKE.

What say'st thou!

Run, fly, obey me.

OFFICER.

Near the gate this moment

I saw a body cover'd o'er with blood,
Carry'd in secret forth by Lisois' orders,
And much I fear——

DUKE.

O heav'n! my brother's dead
And I yet live: earth hath not swallow'd me,
Nor light'ning blasted: a base murderer,
Foe to his country, an unnat'ral brother,
How love has chang'd me! what a load of guilt
Have I to answer for! the veil's remov'd;
And now, alas! I know myself too well;
I cannot be more guilty: O my brother!
I feel I lov'd thee, yet I slew thee, Vamir.

OFFICER.

Amelia comes, my Lord, and begs to speak
In private with you.

DUKE.

O! I must not see her,
Not for the world: I cannot bear it: no,

She

She will revenge the murther in my blood :
But let her come : I tremble to behold her.

S C E N E III.

DUKE of FOIX, A M E L I A, T H A I S.

A M E L I A.

My lord, you have prevail'd : and since that hatred
(How can I call it by another name)
Which hath so long pursued me, now requires
A brother's blood, or his Amelia's hand,
Take it : the choice is made, and I am thine :
Remember, I'm the purchase of thy guilt :
Loosen his chains, and set my Vamir free,
That I no more may tremble for his life,
And I will give thee all, yield up my hopes
Of happiness with him, and follow thee,
Ev'n to the altar ; there the hand that gives
My faith away shall punish all my weakness.
Know, at the temple, where thy bridal vows——
But thou desir'st my hand, and that alone
I have to give thee : ha ! thou'rt silent : say,
Is Vamir, is thy brother freed already ?

DUKE.

My brother !

A M E L I A.

Gracious heav'n !—remove my fears,
Thy eyes are bath'd in tears.

DUKE.

DUKE.

Thou ask'st his life.

AMELIA.

What do I hear? didst thou not promise me——

DUKE.

It is too late.

AMELIA.

Too late! O Vamir!

DUKE.

Yes,

It is indeed: wou'd it were not, Amelia;

The cruel Lifois has obey'd my orders

Too faithfully: O live, to punish me;

Pierce this inhuman, this unnat'ral heart,

That lov'd thee but too well: I kill'd my brother,

But for thy sake: revenge on me the crimes

Which but for thee I never had committed.

AMELIA. [Falling into the arms of Thais.

Vamir is dead, barbarian!

DUKE.

And thy hand

Shall shed the murth'rer's blood.

AMELIA.

[Fainting.

And is he gone?

My Vamir——

DUKE.

DUKE.

Thy reproaches——

AMELIA.

Spare me, spare me,
I'll not reproach thee; take thy sorrows hence,
And thy repentance: let me but embrace him,
And die.

DUKE.

Amelia, thou hast too much cause
To grieve, but O for pity take this life
That's hateful to me; but I've not deserv'd
To perish by thy hand; but thou shalt guide——

S C E N E IV.

DUKE, AMELIA, LISOIS.

LISOIS.

What wou'd thy rashness do?

[They disarm him.]

DUKE.

An act of justice:

Punish myself.

AMELIA.

Wert thou his vile accomplice?

DUKE.

Thou minister of guilt, thou hast obey'd me.

LISOIS.

LISOIS.

I promis'd you, my lord, and I have done
But what I ought.

DUKE.

Thy stubborn virtue oft
Hath check'd my follies, and oppos'd my weakness;
But when I bade thee be a murderer,
And kill my brother, then thou wert obedient.

LISOIS.

When I refus'd but now to execute
The bloody office, did'st thou not employ
Another hand?

DUKE.

Love, pow'rful love, that chain'd
My reason down, and sway'd my foolish heart,
Love pleads for me; but thou whose wisdom calms
Each rising passion, whose unalter'd soul,
Firm and unshaken, I so oft have fear'd,
So oft respected, that thou, thus unmov'd,
Shoud'st suffer such a deed of horror; O
'Tis terrible!

LISOIS.

Since sorrow and repentance,
Virtue's best monitors, have pierc'd thy soul
With just remorse: since, spite of all thy rashness,
To save a brother's blood thou gladly now

Woud'st

Woud'ft give thy own; ye both fhall find a friend.
Keep thou thy penitence.

[To the Duke.

Dry up thy tears.

[To Amelia.

This is a day of triumph. Prince come forth :
Embrace thy brother.

[The Scene opens, and difcovers Vamir.

AMELIA.

O my Vamir !

DUKE.

Ha !

My brother !

AMELIA.

Gracious heaven !

DUKE.

Can it be ?

Again I fee, again embrace my brother.

DUKE.

O thy forgiveness makes my crime ftill greater.

AMELIA.

O noble Lifois, thou haft giv'n me life.

DUKE.

Life to us all.

LISOIS.

A bafe affaffin rais'd

His arm 'gainft Vamir, but I fell'd the traitor,
And laid him breathlefs at my feet, then feign'd

That

That I had shed thy brother's blood : I knew
Thou woud'st repent, and wish the deed undone.

DUKE.

This was a service I can ne'er reward,
But by endeav'ring to be worthy of it :
My crime sits heavy on me, and my eyes,
Fix'd on the earth, dare not look up to Vamir,
And to the wrong'd Amelia.

VAMIR.

We wou'd both
Have serv'd thee with our royal master ; both
Are still devoted to thee. What, my brother,
Is thy design ? O speak.

DUKE.

To do you justice :
To expiate, by the greatest punishment,
The greatest crime that love and fierce resentment
Cou'd e'er commit : long I ador'd Amelia ;
Ev'n when I gave her Vamir up to death,
I lov'd Amelia : I adore her still,
Nay more than ever, yet I yield her to thee,
And sacrifice my heart to make you blest.
Take her, be happy, and forgive thy brother.

VAMIR.

Behold me at thy feet, with gratitude
Warm as thy bounty, as thy love sincere.

AMELIA.

AMELIA.

Permit me to embrace thy knees with Vamir,
Accept our tend'rest friendship, for thy goodness
Has amply paid for all my sufferings past.

DUKE.

No more of this, it doubles my misfortunes,
And shews me but what happiness I've lost :
But I will learn from you to follow virtue,
My heart is yours : I'm now indeed thy brother,
By thy example I will love my country.
Let us away, and to the king relate
My crimes, my sorrows, and thy happiness :
Let Vamir's zeal and Vamir's truth be mine,
Faithful to France, to friendship, and to thee ;
Foix shall deserve your pardon and your praise ;
Ye shall forget his follies and his crimes,
And henceforth know him only by his virtues.

END of the SECOND VOLUME.

